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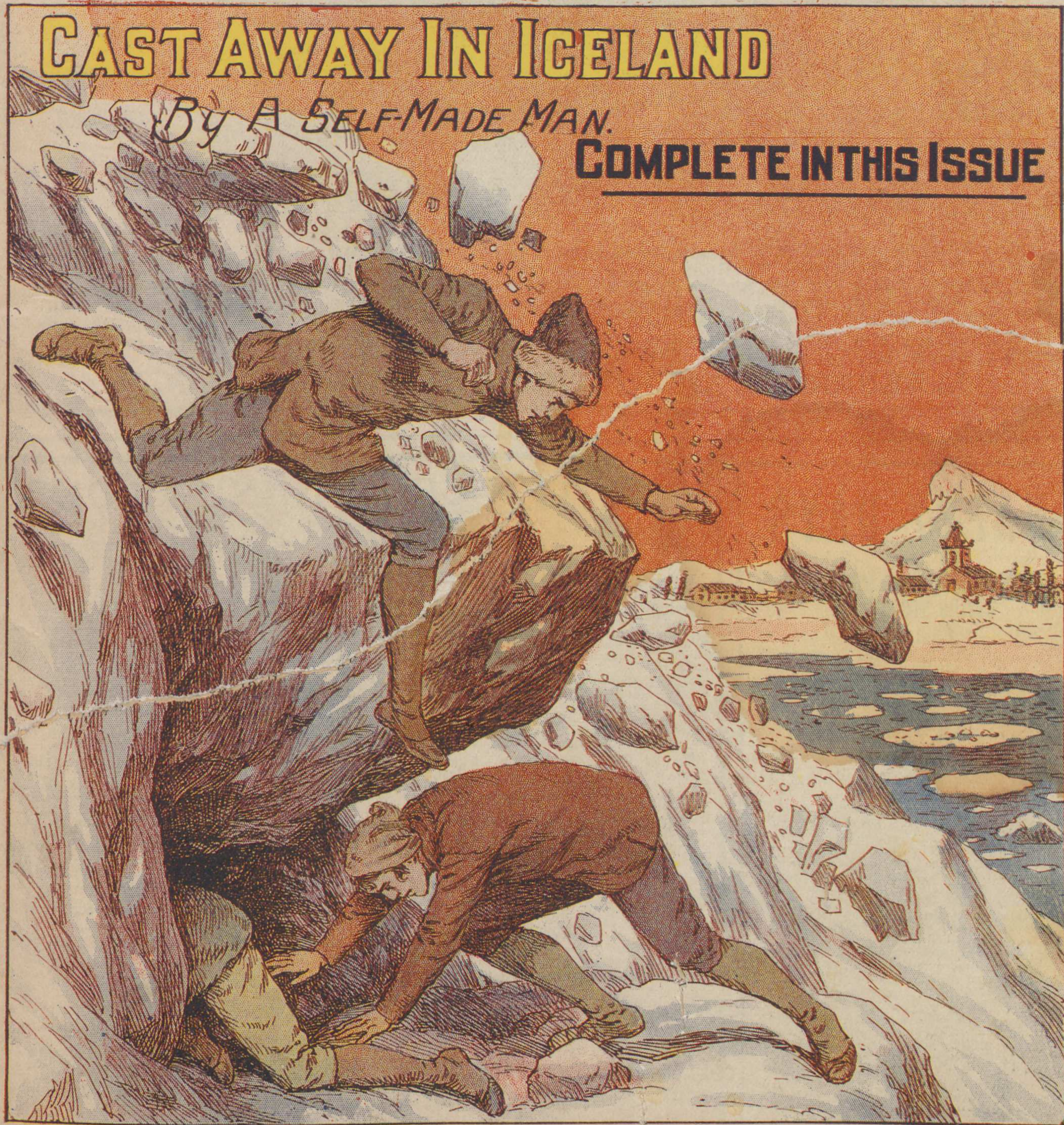
JAN 1 0 1931

BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

CAST AWAY IN ICELAND

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE



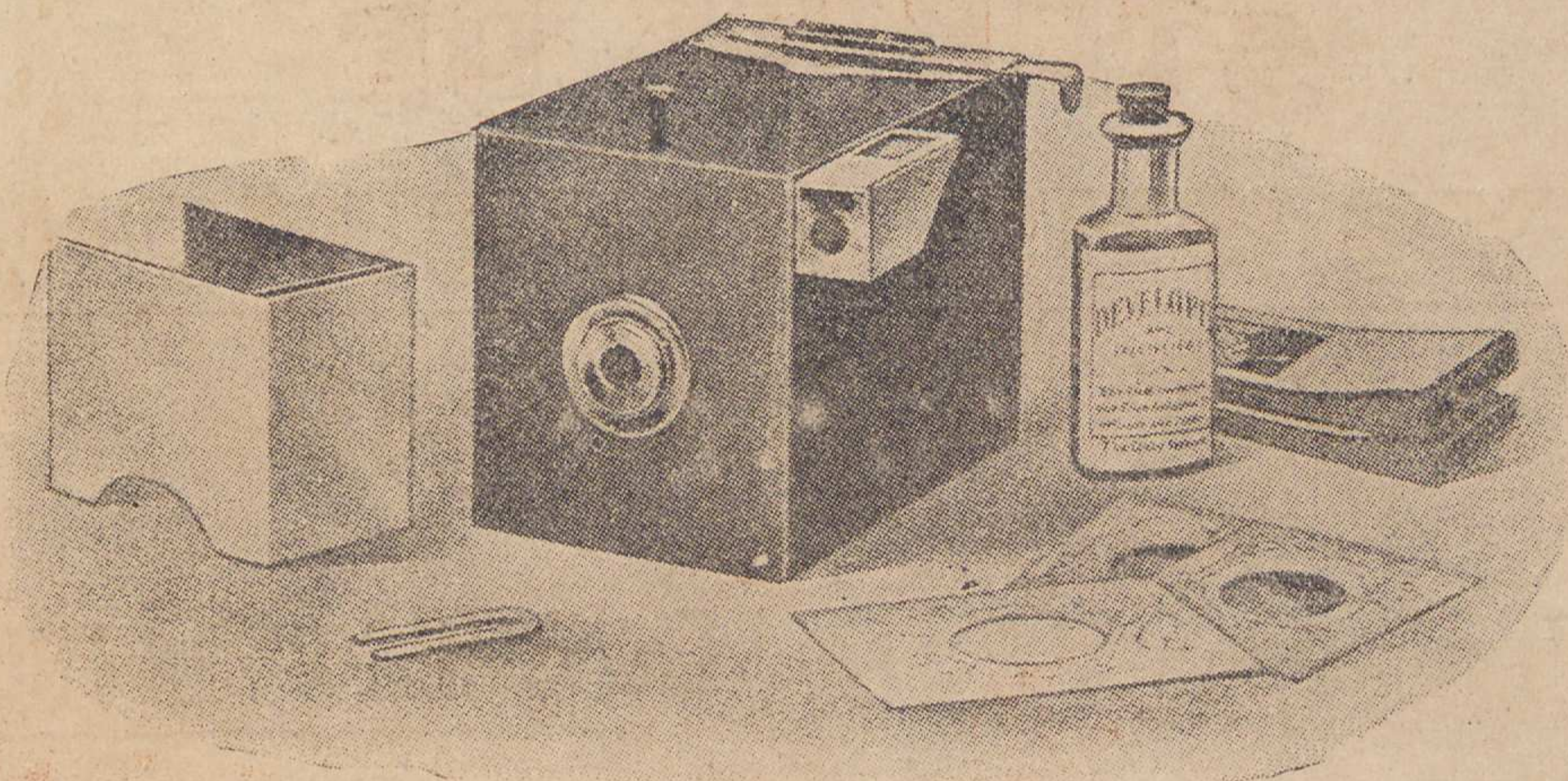
Nat crept under the protecting shelter of the overhanging rock as Hal came flying down the slippery surface above, followed by a rattling shower of snow and ice, the advance guard of the huge avalanche which was thundering down behind.

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PRICE 5 CENTS.

CAST AWAY IN ICELAND

OR,

THE TREASURE OF THE CRATER

By A SELF-MADE MAN

JAN 10 1931

CHAPTER I.

TAKEN OFF AN ICEBERG.

"Gee! It's cold up in these latitudes," said Nat Vickers to his two companions, Hal Holland and Joe Marsh, who stood on either side of him at the bulwark of the New Bedford whaler, Dan Tucker.

"Bet your life it is," nodded Joe. "I hardly dare talk for fear my breath will freeze."

"No danger of that, Joe," laughed Hal. "It's warm enough to make a hole in the air."

"I don't see any hole," grinned Joe.

"Wait till we get nearer the pole and then maybe you'll see lots of them."

"Say, how far north are we, anyway?" asked Joe.

"Close to the 65th parallel. We've just entered Denmark Strait."

"I thought we were still in the Atlantic."

"No, we entered the Strait two hours ago."

"How do you know? You were never here before."

"I heard the mate report the fact to Captain Waldron awhile ago."

"But I thought the Atlantic was our fishing ground?"

"So it is, but the captain has his reasons for going further north."

"That's a mighty big iceberg yonder," said Nat, pointing. "The biggest we've seen so far."

"It's a corker for fair," said Joe. "I'd hate to have it topple over on this vessel. That would be the end of the cruise."

"I see something moving on the side of it," said Nat.

"Probably a polar bear," said Hal.

"No, it isn't a polar bear. Those animals move on all fours. This seems to be moving upright. It can't be a man, do you think?"

"Hardly. Unless his vessel is on the other side of the berg."

"Rather a dangerous place to moor a craft, I should say."

"Oh, I don't know. The water is too cold up here for the base of the berg to melt to any great extent, so there isn't much danger of it losing its balance and going over."

"Say, Hal, you stand well with the skipper and the mate. Go and borrow the glass and let us see what is moving on that berg," said Nat.

Hal had no objection.

The captain was in the cabin, talking with his daughter Jessie, whom he had, at her earnest solicitation, brought with him on this trip into the frozen North, but the mate was walking up and down the roof of the poop, or top of the cabin.

Hal went to the first officer and said:

Mr. Flint, may I borrow your glass. There's something moving around on yonder iceberg that Nat, Joe and I would like to get a closer look at. It doesn't appear to be an animal, as well as we can make out with the naked eye."

"Whereabouts?" asked the mate, stopping in his walk.

Hal pointed and the mate put the glass to his eye and focussed the animated object.

"By George! It's a man!" he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise.

"Is it really a man?" cried Hal.

"Take a squint and see for yourself."

Hal did so, and saw that the figure was really a man.

"He can't be a castaway on that cold spot, can he?" said Hal. "I should think he'd freeze to death in no time."

"Well, I don't see any vessel about," replied the mate. "I must tell the captain."

"There may be a vessel hidden by the berg," said Hal.

"Not unlikely; but I think it is our duty to find out, for the fellow might have gone afloat on that white mass."

"Ever heard of such a case?" asked Hal, as the mate moved away.

"Oh, yes. More than one."

While the mate was away, Hal, forgetful of the curiosity of his two friends, stood and looked at the lone figure on the berg.

"Hey, Hal, fetch the glass," sang out Joe.

Hal didn't hear him, for he saw that the figure was doing something.

Apparently he was waving something in the air—signaling, perhaps, for help.

"I guess the man is a castaway after all," thought Hal.

Just then the captain and the mate came on the poop together.

"He's signaling to us, Captain Waldron," said Hal.

The skipper took the glass and looked.

At that juncture another person was added to the group in the person of the captain's daughter.

She went close to Hal, who was a particular favorite with her.

"Is there really a man on that iceberg?" she asked the boy.

"Yes, Miss Jessie, and he's making signs to us. That shows he's afloat on the berg, and wants to be taken off," replied Hal.

"Poor fellow. We'll rescue him, of course," she said.

Captain Waldron ordered the brig to be headed for the iceberg, and the helmsman followed his directions, while the watch on deck pulled the yards around a bit to meet the new course.

The iceberg on which the man was marooned was not the only one in sight.

Bergs of all sizes surrounded the brig, making careful steering necessary.

All along the border of Denmark Strait were to be seen wide fields of ice that extended out for some distance from the main shore.

Beyond, on either side, the coast of Greenland on the one hand, and Iceland on the other, stretched away in two great white plains as far as the eye could reach—cold, cheerless and inhospitable.

The only sounds that broke the silence of that frigid zone were the creaking of the stiff ropes in the blocks and the conversation of those on board the brig.

The vessel had sailed to the North Atlantic to gather a cargo of whale oil.

The Dan Tucker, though great care and expense had been bestowed upon her, was not a handsome-looking craft.

She was dirty and oily-looking from stem to stern, and her sails were dark from the smoke of the trying-out kettles, which stood amidships, near the mainmast.

She was a stout craft, though, for a whaler, in order to withstand the shock of the ice, is strengthened inside, both at the stem and stern, by stout timbers placed in various

directions and fastened securely together; while on the outside she was in parts covered with a double, and even a treble planking, besides other thick pieces, which served to ward off the blows from the parts most likely to receive them.

But all this strengthening, which the art and ingenuity of man has devised, is of little avail against the mighty power of the ice, if the vessel should unhappily be caught between two converging floes.

The Dan Tucker's masts were lower than in a common sailing vessel, and her sails were smaller, and cut in different shape, the courses, or lower sails decreasing downward, so as to be worked with slight strength.

This was a matter of some importance, as when all the boats were away together in chase of whales, three or four men alone remained on board to take care of the brig.

The cruise had been fairly successful, for the crew had worked with a will, as all were anxious to get through and return to warmer latitudes.

During the last two weeks the captain had been working the vessel farther north than the fishing ground, where they had done so well.

The result was that only two whales had been chased and captured during that time, and many of the men were beginning to grumble at what they considered a foolish change of base.

The sixtieth parallel was as far north as the men cared to go, anyway.

Every degree higher meant about 75 miles farther from home.

Already the captain had worked the vessel 400 miles north of the regular cruising ground, and the crew surmised that he had some other object in view than the completion of his cargo.

The grumbling increased, for the men maintained that they had shipped to catch whales where whales were most numerous, and not to hunt for the North Pole, though they did not suppose for a moment that the skipper had any such end in view.

At the moment the brig was approaching the iceberg on which a man could now be easily seen with the naked eye, the watch below were holding an exciting argument over the course of the brig.

The poor fellow, whoever he was, continued to wave a blanket occasionally, though he could not help seeing that he had been seen, and that his rescue was assured.

At length Captain Waldron ordered the brig to be hove to and a boat lowered and manned to be sent to the berg.

The second mate, a surly and unpleasant man, was ordered to go in her.

He picked the boat's crew, and among others Hal Holland was called upon to get in, the boy obeying against his grain, for there was no love lost between him and the second officer.

"Push off," shouted the second mate, whose name was Mark Noakes, and the bowman shoved the boat clear of the brig.

In another moment the crew of six were pulling in a steady way for the berg.

The marooned one came down close to the water so as to be ready to step in when the boat came up.

Only the mate, who was steering, could see him, and note his looks as they drew near.

That he was an ordinary foremast hand one could see with half an eye.

Only his face, which was as brown as a berry, was exposed, the rest of his body being well protected from the freezing atmosphere, in the customary habiliments of the forecastle in frigid latitudes.

The boat slid up alongside of the floe around the base of the berg, and the bowman caught a grip in the ice with his boat-hook.

"Step aboard, my man," said the mate, in his surly way, and the stranger lost no time in accepting the invitation.

He took the spare seat near the officer, with his powerful back toward the men, and the mate gave the word to start back for the brig.

"Well, how came you on that berg?" asked Noakes, with a keen look at the man. "Got carried away from your ship, I suppose, by accident. Here, take a drink of this. You must need it," and he handed the chap a flask of brandy.

The stranger accepted the flask, uncorked it, smelt of it and then put it to his lips.

Half the contents of the flask gurgled down his throat before he took it from his lips.

Then he smacked his mouth together, drew his hairy sleeve across it, and spoke for the first time, in a hoarse tone, so deep that it seemed to come all the way up from his capacious boots.

"That there is prime stuff, sir, and it goes right to the spot. I ain't seen nothin' like it since me and the old hooker, with all on board, parted company nigh on six months ago, and she went plumb to the bottom like a corpse with a fifty pound shot attached to its legs."

"What!" exclaimed the mate, loud enough for all hands to hear. "Do you mean to say you've been six months on that berg? That's a——"

"I ain't been nowhere else that I know of," interrupted the stranger, with a solemn wink, as though he were taking his Bible oath to the statement.

"Look here, my man, you can't palm off any fok's'l yarns on me," said Noakes, with a frown. "Six months, indeed! Six days would have been a long time."

"You haven't such a thing as a chaw o' terbacker in your clothes, have you?" asked the stranger, with another solemn wink. "I ain't had a chew since yesterday mornin', and my mouth feels strange without somethin' in it."

"No, I haven't," growled the mate. "You shall have some tobacco when we get you aboard."

"What might be the name of your hooker? I see she's a whalin' brig," asked the rescued man.

"The Dan Tucker."

"And what might you be doin' so far north? I ain't seen no whales durin' the six months I was on the berg."

"What's your name, and the vessel you slipped your moorings from?" asked Noakes, disregarding the man's question.

"My name?" replied the stranger, with a solemn wink. "I'll allow I have one. The last time I writ it was on the ship's articles, and they are at the bottom of this here Basin, with a dozen or more of my shipmates to keep 'em company along with the skipper and the rest of the officers,

while I've been sailin' up and down this blamed place for six whole——"

"I asked you your name?" roared Noakes.

"Jest so; I heard you. You don't need to use no speakin' trumpet in this here latitude. I heard that old hooker of yours comin' afore she hove in sight, two hours or more ago. I said to myself, 'Here's a——'"

The mate uttered a coarse imprecation and glared at the stranger.

The chap favored him with another solemn wink.

"My name is William Blaine, but I'm usually called Bill, which I like better."

"And the name of your vessel?"

"The Oliver Hobbs, John Dobbs, master; Ed'ard Lobbs, first mate, and Thomas Nobbs, second officer. The carpenter's name was——"

Mark Noakes looked hot under the collar.

"Where did your craft hail from?" he said.

"Sag Harbor, Long Island."

"How came she to be lost? Nipped by the ice?"

The stranger shook his head with another solemn wink.

"It's too long a story to tell on an empty stomach."

The mate smiled grimly.

"What have you lived on since you've been marooned on the berg?"

"I'll allow that a six months' diet of seal, fish and sich is rather tiresome, and makes a chap long for a bite of salt horse for a change," and the stranger gave another solemn wink.

"My man, I advise you not to try to work that six months yarn on the skipper when you get aboard, for he won't stand for it," growled Noakes.

The only answer the stranger gave was another one of his peculiar winks, and then the boat ran alongside of the brig, and the marooned sailor was presently on the deck of the Dan Tucker, looking around with the air of a man perfectly at home.

CHAPTER II.

A NARROW SHAVE.

At the railing, running across the break of the poop, stood Captain Waldron, his daughter, and chief mate Flint, looking down at the rescued man, who seemed in no wise done up by his experience on the iceberg.

The natural inference was that he had not been there long, in spite of his assertion that he had been sailing up and down Denmark Strait, a pretty considerable body of water in its way, for six whole months living on "seal, fish and sich."

"Come, my man, step forward to the poop. The cap'n is waiting to question you. See that you give him no nonsense," said the second mate, taking him by the arm and leading him aft.

Noakes walked him up one of the side ladders and brought him before the captain, the chief mate, and Miss Waldron.

Bill Blaine seemed not in the least abashed, and winked

solemnly at the trio, saying not a word, but waiting to be questioned.

"What's your name, my man; your ship, and how came you on the iceberg?" asked Captain Waldron, in a bluff but friendly tone.

"Name, Bill Blaine; ship, the Oliver Hobbs; Dobbs, master. How I came on the berg ain't to be told in a minute, and I'd like to have some grub first, if it's all the same to you," replied the rescued sailor.

"You shall have a meal at once. It is close on to the time when the men take their dinner. Hal," to the hero of this story, "take Blaine for'ard and tell the cook to serve him with as much as he can eat," said Captain Waldron.

"I suppose you're hungry?" said Hal, leading the man away.

"Well, my hearty, if you'd been livin' six months on seal, fish and sich you'd feel hungry, too, for a square meal," replied Blaine.

"So you claim to have been on that berg six months?" said Hal, looking at him pretty hard.

"Every minute of it, and I'll allow it warn't no cinch."

"And you had nothing but raw food all that time?"

"Wrong, my hearty; I cooked my victuals."

"Cooked them?" cried the astonished lad. "How?"

"With a fire, of course."

"How did you make a fire? Where did you get the wood?"

"I'll allow there warn't no trees growin' on that berg, though I've seen stranger things in my time. I made the fire of driftwood, and I lit it with a burnin' glass."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hal, dubiously. "How did you manage when the sun wasn't out?"

"Easy enough. I cooked enough at a time to last me several days."

"How did you catch the seals and the fish?"

"When the berg turned over and carried the ship to the top of it, which was the beginnin' of the trouble, it carried quite a supply of fish up with it in a sort of hollow pool, where they swam around and kept quite fresh while I was on it. As for the seal, they came from the mainland on cakes of ice occasionally, and I lay for 'em and finished 'em afore they knew what was goin' to happen," replied the rescued one, with a solemn wink.

"Well, of all the liars," thought Hal, "this chap certainly takes the cake."

They had reached the galley by this time and Hal gave directions to the cook, a burly negro named Pete, to provide the marooned man with a liberal supply of grub.

Leaving him there Hal rejoined his two friends.

"Say, Hal, who is the chap, and how came he on the berg?" asked Nat.

"A sailor by the name of Bill Blaine, who claims to be the sole survivor of a lost vessel called the Oliver Hobbs, of Sag Harbor, Long Island.

"How long was he on the berg?" asked Joe.

"How long do you think?"

"Not very long, from his looks—maybe two or three days."

"He says six months," replied Hal.

"Six months! Get out. How could he live six months on an iceberg?"

"He lived pretty well, according to his own account, except that his diet was limited to cooked seal and fish."

"How did he cook it?"

Hal explained.

"That's pretty good," said Nat. "How did he keep from freezing? Have a fire all the time? I should think he would have melted the berg all away in six months."

"How could he keep a fire going on a solid cake of ice?" interjected Joe. "As the ice melted the water would put it out, wouldn't it?"

"Don't ask me such conundrums. I don't believe a word of the fellow's tale. It's too improbable. He said the beginning of his trouble was when the iceberg turned over and carried the vessel to the top of it. What do you think of that for a good, healthy lie?"

"Gee! He's a beaut. Why didn't you ask him to point out the ship? If the berg carried it up when it turned over it would be up there now, in plain view."

"He told the mate in the boat that the ship went down with all hands but himself," said Hal.

"If she went down she couldn't have gone up. A good liar always tries to stick to one story, otherwise he soon queers himself," said Nat.

"He's a good liar all right," said Hal, "but not a consistent one."

"Well, you know what sailors are when they spin a yarn," said Joe. "Everything goes with them."

"He probably is the survivor of some vessel that was recently smashed in the ice—maybe between two bergs," said Hal. "I don't see why he doesn't tell a straight story. Lying won't gain him any sympathy."

"Now that he's aboard the captain will make his useful," said Joe. "He's a strong, hearty looking chap, and looks able to pull an oar with the smartest man on the brig. I'd just as soon he'd take my place in the second mate's boat as not. I don't cotton to Mr. Noakes for sour apples."

"I'm glad that I'm in the first mate's watch," said Nat. "He's a decent kind of officer. He can run things without indulging in a lot of profanity. If it wasn't for the presence of Miss Waldron aboard, I'm thinking the second mate would break out oftener than he does."

"He's bad enough, particularly at night," said Hal. "He makes a dead set at me more than half the time. I don't know why, for I don't make any breaks. He seems to have soured on me. Several times I thought he was going to down me with a belaying pin; but I guess he knows better than to do it."

"He is aware that Captain Waldron wouldn't stand for it," said Nat.

"Say, have you any idea why we are sailing so far north?" asked Joe.

"No, I have not. I asked Miss Jennie, but all she would say was that her father had something in view."

"Well, the crew are growling like Sam Hill over it."

"I know they are, and I dare say they are looking for the brig to come about and steer south at any moment," said Hal.

"I'd like to know how much further north we're going," said Joe. "I can feel it growing colder every minute."

"You only imagine so; but it certainly is much colder up here than on our regular cruising ground."

"I hope the skipper isn't thinking of stealing a march on the North Pole," grinned Nat.

"No fear of that," said Hal. "It's my opinion that we won't go much further than this Strait, though I haven't the least idea as to the captain's plans."

They were now summoned to the mid-day meal.

The stranger, Bill Blaine, having filled up to his heart's content, had withdrawn to the starboard bulwark, and was leaning over it, with a big quid in his mouth, chewing away with evident enjoyment.

The crew, not yet having made his acquaintance, eyed him curiously, for his remarks in the boat, overheard by the rowers, had been circulated around, and the impression which prevailed was that he was either a little off his base, or had lied deliberately, when he asserted that he had been six months on the berg.

Naturally the men talked about this unexpected addition to their numbers, and they wondered what sort of chap he really was.

They also talked in no cheerful vein of the continued northward course of the brig, the object of which they could not understand, for the captain had apparently ceased to look out for whales, which were clearly scarce where they were.

The icebergs seemed to be growing thicker, and so many of them were a menace to the vessel.

About the time the men finished their dinner the lookout in the crow's nest, which important contrivance was at the top of the maintopgallant-masthead, and was a sort of sentry-box, or deep tub, formed of laths and canvas, with a seat in it, and a movable screen, working on an iron rod, so that it could instantly be brought around on the weather side, reported two mighty icebergs in the brig's course, not more than half a mile apart.

Owing to the wind and the current the brig would be obliged to pass between the two bergs, as it was not possible to clear either to port or starboard.

There was not much likelihood of the bergs toppling over on the brig, but as the pair of giants were setting toward each other, the peril lay in the vessel being caught between their bases and crushed into splinters.

The captain came on the deck and examined the bergs through his glass.

The entire crew, with the exception of the three boys, gathered on the top of the half-deck, or forecastle, and fixed their attention on the situation.

Not one but was more or less nervous, and the comments on the captain for carrying them so far north would have made his ears burn if there was any truth in the old superstition.

Hal walked over beside Bill Blaine, and his friends accompanied him.

"You ought to be familiar with icebergs," said Hal to the strange sailor. "What do you think of our chances of passing between those two fellows?"

Blaine squirted a stream of nicotine overboard and then favored the three boys with a solemn wink.

"I dunno, but I'll say this, the Oliver Hobbs was in several wuss scrapes than this and pulled through. If she hadn't anchored to that there berg I came off she'd been

sailin' the top of the water this minute instead of lying a hundred fathom below."

"How came she to anchor to it?" asked Joe.

"It was this way," replied the sailor, with another wink.

"We had a professor aboard who was after specimens."

"Specimens of what?"

"Anythin' out of the common, sich as snowdrops, which he put in bottles full of spirits; spelldiffers——"

"What in thunder are spelldiffers?" asked Hal, looking hard at Blaine.

"Spelldiffers are a kind of fish without eyes found on bergs," replied the sailor with a wink. "You dig a hole on the shady side of a wall of ice and sprinkle some fine terbacker around the edge, and if there are any spelldiffers there they come out after a chaw, and then you can catch 'em."

The boys gave a gasp.

"Well, one mornin' we sighted the berg you took me off, and the professor said to the skipper that he wanted to land on it to look for a spelldiffer, or somethin' else out of the ord'nary," continued Blaine. "Instead of sending the professor in a boat the cap'n steered 'longside the berg and made fast with a couple of kedge anchors and cables. The fluke of the kedge was stuck into a hole made on purpose to hold it, and there we floated along with the berg, as if it was a big steam-tug."

The sailor stopped to spit overboard.

"The professor went ashore and was soon busy lookin' for spelldiffers, and I was carryin' the auger and a paper of fine terbacker. We didn't have much success, and I was gettin' tired of the job of follerin' him around and borin' holes that amounted to nothin', for nary a spelldiffer showed his nose. I considered it a waste of good terbacker, though I'll allow I was curious to see what kind of thing a spelldiffer was."

Blaine paused again to expectorate.

"Then you never saw a spelldiffer?" grinned Joe.

The sailor winked his eye solemnly at the boy.

"No, but I've seen more curious things than that in knockin' around the world," he said.

Joe punched Nat in the ribs, and the latter chuckled broadly.

The castaway looked at him suspiciously for a moment and then went on.

"Suddenly I noticed that the berg had tilted to the loo'ard," he said. "I called the professor's attention to the fact and said we'd better go back to the vessel, for there was no tellin' what might happen. The professor guessed I was right, and back we went. We found the base of the berg had lifted a little, but not much. Nobody aboard had noticed it at any rate. The professor thought it was a shame to stop huntin' for a specimen, so he told me to bore a hole in the flat ice about fifty foot from the ship, for he had an idea that he might find a spelldiffer there instead of in the icy walls. I bored the hole, but the auger wouldn't come out like it done afore. I gripped the handle tight and was about to pull with all my might, when——"

The boys were so deeply interested in the derelict's yarn that they forgot to notice that the brig had entered the narrow passage between the two icebergs.

Suddenly a fearful cracking sound shattered the Arctic silence.

It was like a volley of musketry from a regiment at close quarters.

The iceberg to the starboard parted in the middle, part way from the top, and the debris crumbled and fell into the water with a rush and a roar, like a landslide.

A small waterspout rose in the air, spread out, and when it fell in a heavy shower, every soul on board the brig was soaked.

The whaler rose, as if propelled by some secret machinery, rolled almost to the top of her port bulwark, and then righted after a tilt to starboard.

By the time order was restored from the confusion that took place the brig had passed the two bergs in safety.

CHAPTER III.

WHALE CATCHING.

"Gee!" exclaimed Joe. "What an escape!"

"That's right," admitted Hal and Nat in a breath, as the three started for the galley to dry their clothes by the heat within.

Pete, the cook, got doused as well as the rest, for he had been out on deck looking at the two icebergs.

He preceded the boys into his domain, and when Bill Blaine followed, the little house was full, and the rest of the crew couldn't find room there, so they hurried into the forecastle.

That left nobody on deck but the second mate and the helmsman, and they shivered from the chill occasioned by their damp garments.

"That's the time we nearly got it in the neck," said Joe.

"That ain't nothin' to what I was goin' to tell you, my hearties, when I was interrupted by that there little incident," said the derelict, solemnly, winking at the colored cook.

"Go on with your yarn," said Hal. "You had just bored a hole in the ice and couldn't get the auger out."

"I gripped the handle with both hands and was about to give a tremenjous pull when somethin' happened," said the sailor.

"What happened?" asked Nat.

"A loud, crackin' noise, as if the innards of the berg was givin' way," said Blaine. "The hull thing shivered, like it had a fit of ague, and then——"

He broke off, stepped outside and went to the lee rail to spit.

"I'm thinking this is going to be a long-winded yarn," chuckled Hal.

"Do you know why he stopped and went outside?" asked Joe.

"To squirt a mouthful of tobacco juice over the rail," said Nat.

"Yes; but the real reason was because he was stuck and he wanted time to think up what he should say next," replied Joe, sagely. "He's the biggest liar I ever met."

"As I was sayin'," said Blaine, when he returned, "the

berg shivered from stem to stern, and from keel to truck, and then somethin' happened."

"I suppose it did," said Hal, winking at Nat.

"It began to turn slowly over to loo'ard. I gave a yell, and me and the professor started for the ship. The skipper ordered the cables cut to save the vessel. But that didn't do no good," said the sailor, shaking his head dolefully.

"Was the berg toppling over on top of her?" asked Joe.

"No; it was droppin' away from her; but you see in goin' close to the berg the ship had sailed over a part of it that was under water out of sight, and so, when that part begun to rise, it carried the vessel up with it into the air."

"Holy smoke!" gasped Joe. "What a——"

Then he stopped, for the sailor fixed him with his eye, and his eyes looked kind of bad.

"The professor caught a rope and was hauled aboard, but I slipped, and afore I could get up the ice had such a slant that I slid right back plum against the auger, where I hung on for dear life."

"You were lucky," grinned Hal.

"I was, shipmate, though I didn't think so at the time."

"Go on; you'll have to give this story to the newspaper reporters when we get back to New Bedford," said Hal.

"Is that where you hail from?"

"It is."

"We rose about a hundred feet in the air, the ship restin' with her stern p'intin' to the sky, when——"

"Something happened," broke in the irrepressible Joe.

"It did. Somethin' that took my breath away."

"You're talking our breath away," muttered Joe.

"The great slab of ice ag'in which the ship's nose rested suddenly gave way and the hooker started to slide down the incline, like a big sled. It didn't take more'n a moment or two for her to reach the water, and she went under, like a railroad train disappearin' into a tunnel, and that was the last of her, while I was left high in the air, clingin' to the end of the auger."

"So that's how you came to get on the berg where we found you?" said Hal.

"That's how," nodded the sailor, walking outside to spit again.

"Say," said Nat, "I wonder what his object is in telling that fierce yarn?"

"I couldn't tell you," replied Hal.

"It's my opinion he's tryin' to cover up the truth," said Nat. "Maybe he committed a murder and was marooned on that berg. He looks bad enough to be capable of most anything."

Bill Blaine did not return, and when Hal looked for him he saw that he had been summoned to the poop to tell his story to the captain.

"I wonder if he'll dare tell Captain Waldron the same yarn he sprung on us," said Joe.

"He'd better tell the truth if he knows when he's well off," said Nat.

The boys, feeling dry enough, left the galley.

Looking around the Strait they saw, to their great satisfaction, that most of the icebergs in sight had passed to the south, and that they had plenty of clear water ahead.

The sky was clear and bright, the sun scarcely disappearing at all, for it was the season of continuous day.

The brig's course had been altered and she was heading shoreward.

The lookout had reported an Esquimau village, built under the shelter of what appeared to be a hill, and for some reason the captain had decided to communicate with the natives.

Suddenly the man in the crow's nest announced a whale close at hand.

This occasioned some excitement, and there was a rush on the part of the crew for the port bulwark.

A few minutes later two others were sighted and the excitement increased.

The first and second mates' boats were launched and manned with their usual crews.

Nat was attached to Flint's boat, Joe to Noakes', while Hal belonged to the captain's boat, which did not get off until the others had gone some distance.

Bill Blaine and four of the crew remained on board to handle the vessel, which was in charge of the brig's carpenter, who was a capable seaman.

The first whale sighted had disappeared, and the mates' boats went after the other two, which were at some distance.

The first whale, a big fellow, came up in a different place, and the captain started for him.

The crew pulled a long, steady stroke, for all were well drilled in the business, and the boat rapidly approached the leviathan.

The harpooner stood in the bow with his instrument ready for action.

"Gently—no noise," warned the skipper as they drew near the whale. "Rest on your oars. Now—sharp!"

This was the signal for the harpooner to act, and he did with promptitude, skill and vigor.

Raising his arm, he darted the sharp, barbed weapon straight at the whale.

The harpoon hit its mark and was deeply imbedded in the flesh.

At once the wounded creature struck the sea furiously with its tail and plunged.

The whale soon rose and darted away.

The cord was rapidly uncoiled from the tub in which it was carried, and Hal with a bucket in his hand poured water on it as it ran out to prevent the friction setting the line on fire.

At length the mighty monster of the deep began to show signs of weakness, spouting water and blood as it churned up the water around it.

"Haul in and roll up," said the captain, taking advantage of the whale's condition.

This was promptly done until once more they were so near that the harpooner prepared to give their victim the finishing touch with the lance.

As the weapon hit the whale it darted at the boat, and with one stroke of its mighty tail upset it and sent everybody into the water.

Then it darted off, dragging the wrecked boat behind, leaving the captain and his crew floundering in the sea.

Luckily the first mate's boat was near at hand, and dashing to the scene, the swimmers were soon picked up.

Flint had lost the whale he went after, and so there was nothing for him to do but return to the brig with the skipper and his men.

The second mate's boat was more than a mile away, and her crew had apparently made a capture.

The captain asked the lookout if the whale which had got away from him, and put his boat out of business, was in sight.

"Dead, lying on its side, off yonder," replied the man in the crow's nest.

The vessel was worked down to the carcass, and it was taken possession of.

An hour later the second mate's boat, with a small whale in tow, and the brig, came together.

The prize was carefully secured on the other side of the vessel.

The brig's crew were then piped to their belated supper. After that the watch below turned in.

The other watch brought the vessel to within a short distance of the ice barrier which extended out from the shore proper.

It was now nine p. m., but as bright as day, the sun being plainly in sight, low down on the horizon.

Work was over till the morrow, when a fire would be lighted under each of the trying-out kettles, and the whales would be cut up, one at a time, and their blubber reduced to oil.

The men were in better humor this evening than they had been for a week back.

The two captured whales would almost complete their cargo of oil, and they figured that the skipper would have no further excuse for working to the north.

CHAPTER IV.

TIDINGS OF AN ABANDONED VESSEL.

Next morning all hands set about the big job in hand.

First, the harpooners, with spikes of iron secured to their feet, to prevent them from slipping off the back of the large whale, which was tackled first, got to work with blubber-knives and other instruments.

The fat is a casing on the outside of the whale, so that it can be easily got at.

With their blubber-knives the men cut it into oblong pieces, and with their spades they lifted it from the flesh and bones.

To the end first lifted a strap and tackle was fastened, and the men on deck hauled it on board.

The work had hardly got well under way when the captain came on deck and ordered the small boat to be lowered.

The three boys were told to get into her, and the skipper followed.

He directed his young rowers to pull for the shore.

The Esquimau village was a small and unimportant hamlet of circular huts on the coast of Iceland.

It had some commerce, however, for it was a place of ren-

devious for the natives to sell their seal skins and other merchandise.

A number of Esquimaux, with sleds drawn by dogs, were out at the edge of the ice watching the brig, and they saw the approaching boat.

Leaving Nat and Joe in charge of the boat, Captain Waldron and Hal were driven to the residence of the governor, who lived in the best habitation in the village, though that wasn't saying much for it.

He was a native, but spoke very fair English.

The captain introduced himself as the master of the American whaler, Dan Tucker, from New Bedford, and the governor said he was glad to see him.

He informed Captain Waldron that the name of the village was Uppernavik, and that he was very proud to be the boss of the place.

He further said that an English clergyman lived there and conducted a school.

The captain then mentioned the object of his visit, which was to learn, if possible, something about a missing whaling bark called the John Brown, which belonged to the firm that owned the Dan Tucker.

This vessel had left New Bedford for the North Atlantic over two years before, and had failed to return home in due course, and nothing had been heard from her.

The owners feared the vessel had been lost in the ice, but hoped such was not the case, for her captain was a very capable man.

Under the impression that she might have taken refuge in some bay or inlet, and there remained locked up, as it were, by the surrounding ice during the long, dark Arctic winter, the owners had instructed Captain Waldron to prosecute a search for her.

In the event that he found no trace of her he was to try and learn whether she was lost or abandoned, and, in that case, what had become of the officers and crew.

Thus, in listening to Captain Waldron's interview with the governor, Hal began to understand why the brig had been sailed so far north.

The captain had learned that the John Brown was spoken by another whaler in Denmark Strait toward the end of the preceding summer, and he hoped by going there himself to secure some tidings either of her or the officers and crew in case the vessel had been wrecked by the ice.

The governor could give him no information on the subject, but told him that he had heard of a vessel having been caught in the ice some distance to the north and abandoned.

It might be the vessel he was looking for, or it might not.

"When did you get that news?" asked Captain Waldron.

"Me got news 'bout t'ree or four months ago," replied the governor, after a mental calculation of the time.

"Three or four months ago! Who brought it to you?"

"Misque."

"Who is Misque?"

"Esquimau man."

"How did he learn about the abandoned vessel?"

"He up dat way. Seen ship in ice. Went aboard. No-body there. All gone."

"He must have seen the name of the vessel," said the captain eagerly. "Don't you remember it?"

The governor shook his head.

"You talk to Misque. He tell you everyt'ing."

"Where is he?"

"He come to village two t'ree day ago. Me send for him."

"I wish you would. If that was the John Brown, the captain, officers and crew must have started on foot to make their way to the southward. It's a wonder they haven't reached this village."

"P'raps no come this way," said the governor.

"I should think they would have followed the coast."

"No easy to walk. Much 'portant dat you have sled and dog."

"That's true enough, I guess."

"No have guide easy to lose way."

The captain admitted that fact, too.

Misque was sent for, and he turned up in the course of half an hour, while the governor was treating Captain Waldron and Hal to such simple refreshments as his establishment afforded.

The Esquimau was short and squat, not more than four feet seven inches high, with rubicund face of the shape of a full moon, and black hair falling over his shoulders.

He was a fair type of a native Iclander.

He was a great traveler, knew the northern part of the island like a book, and having mixed a great deal with white men, could make himself understood in several languages, but more particularly in English.

The governor told him why he had been sent for, and then introduced him to Captain Waldron.

"You were up north some months ago, I understand, and came upon a vessel abandoned in a creek," said the captain.

"Yes," replied the Esquimau. "A whaler."

"Sure of that, eh?" replied the shipper, eagerly.

"Yes. I saw many barrels of oil in her hold. She had three masts, but the hind one had no cross pieces—yards. Had long pieces sticking out at back, with sail folded up."

"A bark," said Captain Waldron, almost satisfied that he had struck the right trail. "You saw her name, didn't you?"

Misque shook his head.

"It must have been on her bows and also on her stern."

The Esquimau said he had not taken any notice of it.

At least, he did not remember doing so.

The captain was much disappointed.

He counted on the Esquimau supplying this important clue.

He asked Misque to describe the craft as accurately as he could, and the man did so to the best of his ability.

The description, however, would have fitted a score of other barks that were or had been in those waters.

"The name of the vessel I am looking for is the John Brown," said the captain. "Doesn't that refresh your memory?"

Misque had to admit that it did not, but he said he had brought a book and a sealed letter away from the vessel.

He had found them lying on the cabin table.

"Where are they?" asked Captain Waldron, eagerly.

The Esquimau said he had left them with a man he stopped with in the village.

He would go and get them right away.

"Good!" cried the captain. "They will probably throw light on the subject."

Accordingly, Misque went away to get the important articles.

While he was gone the governor took Captain Waldron and Hal for a short stroll about the village of scattered huts.

They went as far as the school-house, a fair-sized one-story hut built of the same thick material out of which the ordinary dwellings were constructed, and like them arched on top in dome form, with a hole in the center to let the smoke of a fire built within escape.

Here they found the English clergyman, to whom the governor introduced them.

He was a man of modest appearance, who, with his good wife, had devoted their lives to the mental and moral improvement of the little community, and their efforts had met with encouraging success.

He was delighted to see a couple of English-speaking people, and after a short talk insisted on taking them around to his hut to make them acquainted with his wife.

The governor remained at the school to keep the scholars in subjection, and his importance produced the necessary effect.

When Captain Waldron, Hal and the clergyman returned to the school-house, they found Misque there with the letter and the log book of the abandoned craft.

The captain took both eagerly.

Opening the book, the first words he read were: "Log Book of the American bark, John Brown, Josiah Matthews, New Bedford, Mass. Grigsby & Co., owners."

"Found—at last!" exclaimed Captain Waldron, in a tone of satisfaction.

CHAPTER V.

THE TREASURE CHEST.

"You will pardon me a few minutes," said the captain to the clergyman.

"Certainly, sir," replied the dominie. "Be seated at my table," and he signed to the governor, who rose and walked to the door, where he engaged in a conversation with Misque.

Captain Waldron, before looking further into the log book, opened the letter, which was not sealed, and began to read.

He had not proceeded far before he uttered a startled ejaculation, which, however, did not attract the attention of either Hal or the clergyman who were talking about the school, and the progress made by the funny looking little Esquimaux.

The letter was a long one and took the captain more than a quarter of an hour to finish, his manner showing great agitation toward the close.

When he reached the end he sat for some moments star-

ing at the signature of the writer, like a person stunned by some terrible revelation.

At last he folded it up and put it carefully away in an inner pocket, and turned his attention to the log book.

He ran the leaves over rapidly till he came to a certain part, which he read carefully, and then seemed to consider what he had read.

Then he hurried over the leaves again till he reached another place at which he stopped, and from there on gave the pages more or less attention.

While he was thus engaged Hal and the clergyman exhausted the subject of the school, and began to talk about Iceland, and particularly the country around about that locality.

Hal learned a whole lot about that extensive island, for the clergyman had lived many years on it, and was thoroughly familiar with it.

"It consists in great part of lofty mountains, many of which are active volcanoes. Only certain level districts along the coasts are inhabited, or capable of cultivation," said the clergyman.

"I suppose the biggest part of the island will never amount to anything, then?" replied Hal.

"It is not likely to, for nature has raised an impassable barrier to progress, in the shape of rugged tracts of naked lava and ice-fields. The inhabitants are largely dependent on hunting and fishing."

"What do the Icelanders hunt besides seals and polar bears, and maybe whales?"

"Sea-fowl are abundant at this season of the year, and are largely killed. The walrus and several species of seal are abundant. The whale and cod fisheries are of special importance."

"I should think you'd get tired of living in this out-of-the-way spot—where you have no daily paper to keep you in touch with what is going on in the world."

"I am perfectly contented with the place and the work Heaven has selected me to perform," replied the clergyman in a mild tone.

"Then you intend to remain here indefinitely?"

"I have no idea of making any change at present," he replied.

Hal glanced at the captain and saw that he was still engaged with the log book.

Then he saw a curious looking piece of glistening metal hanging behind the chair.

"What is that?" he asked the clergyman, pointing at it.

"A piece of ore found by an Esquimau in an extinct crater up the coast," was the reply. "A curious story attaches to it."

"Yes?" said Hal, in some curiosity.

The native who found and brought that piece of ore to me declared that he saw a chest of gold coins in a hole there which he was unable to reach because he had no rope, or other means of lowering himself down to it."

"A chest of gold coins!" exclaimed Hal, much astonished.

"Yes, a seaman's chest."

"Do you believe that?"

"I think the man must have seen such a thing, though he

may have mistaken the nature of its contents, for he is a thoroughly reliable fellow."

"Why didn't you get him to take you to the spot? Such a thing as a chest full of money is worth investigating."

"I could not very well go on such an expedition, and besides, I have no particular use for money in quantity."

"You could return to civilization with it and live like a nob."

The clergyman shook his head.

"Such a prospect does not appeal to me. Rather would I remain here and minister to the welfare of the simple inhabitants who appreciate what I and my wife do for them. Believe me, there is no greater happiness than to feel that you are filling a niche in the universe which would miss you were you to drop out."

"I suppose the native told the governor, or some of his friends, about what he saw, didn't he?"

"Yes; an expedition was organized to recover the chest and its contents."

"And it was recovered, I suppose, and made the party rich—that is, if it was really a chest of money?"

"It was not recovered," replied the clergyman.

"Why not?"

"Because the Esquimaux was unable to find the spot in the crater from which he caught a view of the treasure chest."

"If he hunted long enough I should think he would have found it. How big is the crater?"

"It's of some size I have been told, and dangerous to go down into. If one lost his footing it would mean death, for the depth of the opening is unknown."

"How far up the coast is this crater?" asked Hal.

"Sixty or seventy miles, I believe."

"Is it hard to reach?"

"Although very high, and standing out as a landmark, distinguishable at a considerable distance, it is not hard to reach from the east. The approaches, however, are covered with snow and ice, and I should imagine it would be difficult to get near it for that reason by any one not accustomed to the country. The Esquimaux can go most anywhere without being deterred by obstacles that would daunt a white stranger."

"I suppose it is not near any inhabited place?"

"There is a village close by, close to the shore."

"What is the name of the village?"

"Tamasak."

"Do you know I should like to have a try for that treasure," said Hal.

The clergyman smiled.

"Impossible," he said, mildly. "If Guilik could not find it again how could you, even suitably accompanied, hope to reach it?"

"We Americans can accomplish a whole lot when we put our minds to it," said Hal. "However, it isn't likely I'll have the chance for a look in, for I am not an independent person. I am attached to the brig in which I came here, and where she goes I have to go. I hardly think Captain Waldron would fall in with any proposition I might make him on the subject. A chest of gold coins has its attractions, but the skipper wouldn't care to embark on a wild goose chase after it."

The clergyman clearly agreed with him.

At that juncture Captain Waldron closed the log book, and, calling Hal, handed it to him.

"We will return to the brig now," he said. "But first I wish to have t talk with the Esquimaux."

He went to the door and called Misque aside.

Their conversation was short and then the man went away.

Captain Waldron and Hal bade the clergyman good-by, and, accompanied by the governor, started back through the village.

They parted with the boss of the village at the door of his habitation and continued on.

The brig was in plain view, but a short distance off shore, with the crew working like busy bees along her port side on the body of the big whale, and on her deck, from which rose a heavy cloud of black smoke from the trying-out kettles.

"Hal," said the captain, in a solemn way, "you've been talking with that chap we took off the iceberg. What do you think of him?"

"I think he's the biggest liar under the sun, and a mighty hard case to boot," replied the boy, promptly.

"A liar—how?"

Hal told the captain the story Bill Blaine had related to him and his two friends soon after he was brought aboard.

"Did he give you the same yarn, sir?" asked the boy.

"He did not. He could hardly expect me to believe such a thing as that. He told me that he belonged to a Norwegian sealer named the Nykoping. That he and two companions left the vessel one morning on a polar bear hunt, were overtaken by a snow storm and were unable to find their way back to the bark. They wandered about for several days and finally reached the shore. By that time they were nearly dead with hunger and exhaustion. Climbing a tall projecting cape of ice to make observations, as a last resort, his two companions lost their balance and slid down into a crevasse, disappearing from view. While trying to make out where they had gone he fell into another part of the crevasse and slid into a kind of cave, where he found a cache of provisions. After satisfying his hunger he tried to crawl out with the view of finding his friends, but the feat was impossible. He remained there all through the winter months and well up to the present part of summer, when the cape of ice in some way became detached from the shore, resolved itself into an iceberg and went afloat. He was now able to get out of the cave and walk about the berg. He floated around for a considerable time, and had just exhausted the last of the provisions when we hove in sight. He signaled us and was taken off, for which blessing he was truly thankful," said Captain Waldron.

"That's a more reasonable story than the one he gave us, but I doubt if it is the exact truth," said Hal.

"I have my doubts, too," said the captain, solemnly. "Now I want you to try and pump him if you can manage it. Be careful, for I fear he is a bad character, and whatever he lets drop inform me about. Try to discover if he has ever been a cook."

"I heard him tell Pete this morning that he could knock spots out of him at making coffee," said Hal.

"He said that?" cried Captain Waldron.

"Yes, and he wanted the cook to let him fry his own bacon. He said he could do it a whole lot better."

The captain remained silent during the rest of the walk to the place where they took a sled, offered by an Esquimau, and were carried out to where the boat lay.

"You were away some time," said Nat to Hal. "What sort of place is the village?"

"Nothing to brag about. We met the governor, or boss of the hamlet, and also a clergyman, who runs a school, and his wife," replied Hal.

A few lusty strokes soon brought the boat under the brig's port quarter, and the captain, followed by the boys, stepped on board.

"Hal," said the skipper, "follow me into the cabin."

They found Jessie reading beside the stove.

She gave the boy a winsome smile and put down her book, expecting to exchange a few words with him.

In this she was disappointed, for her father took Hal straight into his state-room and carefully shut the door, turning the key in it, to the boy's surprise.

"Hal, for a reason which I deem very important, I am going to take you into my confidence," he began, in a tone that gave the lad an idea that something out of the usual was on the tapis. "You have doubtless gathered from what you have heard during our visit to the village that the reason why I have sailed so far north of our regular whaling ground was to learn intelligence about the missing bark, John Brown. I was instructed to do this by the owners, Grigsby & Co., to whom the vessel belongs, in case I obtained no tidings of her in the ordinary way."

The captain paused and took the letter out of his pocket. He held it in his hand while he went on.

"The log book you brought aboard, and this letter, came from the John Brown, brought to the village by Misque, the Esquimau. You understand that?"

"Yes, sir."

"The letter, which I want you to read, for a particular reason, tells a horrible story. While you are reading it I will take the book and go into the cabin. I will return in a short time, and then we will have a talk."

Thus speaking, Captain Waldron handed Hal the letter, picked up the book, and left the state-room.

CHAPTER VI.

A TALE OF HORROR.

The letter was addressed: "To any shipmaster or other person who speaks English," and ran as follows:

"This will inform the world that the whaler, John Brown, owned by Grigsby & Co., of New Bedford, Mass., U. S. A., has been abandoned here, with her cargo of sperm oil, by the survivors of a tragedy, in which the master, Josiah Matthews; first mate, David Ogden; carpenter, Walt Becker, and able seamen Parker, Mudgett, Boone, Taylor and Hobson lost their lives at the hands of a revengeful scoundrel named Steve Williams, whom we picked up at sea, a month back, in an open boat, and who claimed to be

the sole survivor of the ship Esmeralda, Tavistock, master, bound from Cardiff, in Wales, for St. Johns, New Brunswick, which he says went down in a heavy gale with all hands saving himself.

"This fiend in human form proved unmanageable from the first, and on one occasion had to be put in irons for wounding the cook with his sheath knife. He was subsequently released, on promising to behave himself, though Captain Matthews intended turning him over to the authorities when we got back to port. He did behave after a fashion, but his conduct was never satisfactory. In the light of what ultimately happened it seems clear that the scoundrel meditated revenge, and was only biding his time. That time came weeks later, when the bark was obliged to seek winter quarters in this creek to avoid utter destruction from the fast-forming ice which cut off our escape from these Arctic waters.

"We had been two weeks in the creek, completely surrounded by the ice, which, owing to the narrowness of the anchorage ground, could not accumulate sufficient force to injure the stanch timbers of the bark, when the cook was taken ill. He was not in a dangerous way, but was incapacitated from attending to his duty. In this emergency the captain called for a volunteer cook, and Steve Williams was the first who responded. The captain did not regard his application with much favor, but the man assured him that he was a good cook, and, after some hesitation, Captain Matthews consented to give him a trial. To the surprise of all hands he demonstrated unusual ability in the galley, and was allowed to fill the cook's shoes for the time being. Naturally he was allowed to have the run of the vessel's store-room, and there, in an evil moment, the villain discovered a package of arsenic, which poison was used to keep down the large cockroaches which infested the vessel.

"On Christmas Day the captain proposed to give all hands a blow-off, in honor of the day, not that there was any turkey or other kind of fowl in sight. Williams was directed to spread himself, and he promised to prepare as near an approach to a plum pudding as the resources of the craft permitted. He cooked the pudding two days before, and exhibited it with apparent pride. It certainly looked good, and he was complimented over the result. For the first time since he came on board the ghost of a grin rested on his features, and as he had behaved unusually good since he took charge of the galley, the unpleasant feelings that all hands had entertained toward him were mitigated, and the hand of good fellowship was extended to him, as seemed to be about the right sentiment for Christmas time.

"Christmas Day opened as dark as a six months' polar night can make it around the sixty-seventh parallel, and there were snow flurries all morning. Dinner was set for four o'clock. Two hours before that time several polar bears made their appearance on the ice, and I proposed to the first mate that we take our rifles and try and capture one. Had he fallen in with my proposition his life would have been spared. He declined to leave the bark because he preferred to read in the cabin to engaging in a bear hunt, with its possible dangers, so being bent on the expedition, I looked around for another companion or two.

"I found them in the chief harpooner and two of the foremast hands. At the last moment a young apprentice we had aboard joined us, and the five of us started for the bears. The animals did not show fight, as we expected they would, but led us quite a chase. We soon lost sight of the bark, but we had our bearings and did not fear that we would have any great difficulty in getting back. Two hours passed unnoticed in the excitement of the chase, and at last we wounded one of the bears and closed in on him. At that moment it began to snow, and we hastened to make short work of the bear. He was not an easy proposition when brought to bay, and by the time we finally mastered him we were in the midst of a blinding snowstorm.

"We had to abandon our prize and make tracks for the bark. This was no longer an easy job, for the air had grown thick and black, and the prominent landmark on which we relied was hidden from us entirely, so that by no amount of guesswork could we determine in which direction it lay. However, we made the best of a bad job, and tried to retrace our steps. We succeeded very badly, indeed, for after plodding on for miles we failed to get sight of the lights we knew the captain would display for our benefit.

"To make a long story short we had to admit that we were lost, and we took shelter in an ice cave as the best refuge at hand to wait for the storm to blow over, which looked unlikely till morning. It was hard luck to lose our Christmas dinner, or rather the piece de resistance—the plum pudding, for which our mouths had watered, and never more so than at that moment when we were far removed from it. If we had only known how lucky we were in missing it; but we didn't, you know. That knowledge came later on, and it quite took the starch out of us.

"We passed that long night as best we could, huddled together for warmth, and along toward the time when morning would have broken in lower latitudes the storm eased up and finally quit altogether. The sky remained as dark as ever, for the snow clouds still hung threateningly above the landscape, as if uncertain whether to begin operations all over again or not. In that state of affairs it was quite impossible for us to get a sight of the landmark on which we relied to find our way back to the vessel, consequently we did not deem it wise to leave our shelter yet awhile.

"It seemed to us that half a day passed away before the air lightened. Then we looked around for the landmark. We saw what appeared to be it miles away in the distance. Apparently we had wandered a long way out of the right direction. We were mighty hungry by this time, and we started toward the landmark at as fast a clip as the snow would permit of, which, you may believe, was not very rapid. Not one of us showed any tendency to lag, though we had a tough tramp ahead of us. In the course of an hour or so we recognized the landmark beyond any doubt, and that encouraged us greatly.

"Well, it was darkening up again, which meant that another polar day was drawing to its close, when we came in sight of the bark. The sight of her inspired a cheer, although we were awfully fagged out by that time. It was like coming in sight of one's home port after a long cruise in foreign waters. We pegged away with the remains of our strength, and at last we reached the vessel, and wearily clambered up the icy ladder, covered with snow, which

showed the tracks of a single pair of heavy boots. I noticed that these tracks led away out on the ice in the direction of the Basin, but their significance did not then strike me.

"To our surprise there wasn't a light fore or aft, neither in the galley nor on the masts, where, now that it was quite dark again, we looked to see lights hung as a guide to us lost ones. Moreover, the vessel was as silent as the grave, something most unusual. When I remarked the strangeness of it, the apprentice said that maybe all hands had gone off in parties searching for us. It was singular that I had not thought of so reasonable a thing, and so I agreed that that was the cause of the silence and the absence of lights.

I started for the cabin and my companions for the fok's'l. When we had thawed out a bit we intended to forage in the pantry for something to eat. The cabin was as dark as the fabled caves of Erebus, and as cold as any house could be without a fire, for the big stove had gone almost out, which fact gave me the idea that the captain and chief mate, with the hands, must have started out early on the hunt for us, probably right after the storm stopped.

"The cold did not bother me so much, as my blood was in circulation after the long walk, so the first thing I did was to strike a match to light the lamp which swung above the table. The table was covered with dishes, on which lay fragments of food, to my mind the remains of an early dinner before the start was made. The door of the captain's state-room stood ajar, and so did the chief mate's, but this only showed seeming haste on the part of the occupants.

"After lighting the lamp I turned to the stove, intending to start it up, when my four companions of the hunt came dashing in on me with a look of horror on their faces I shall never forget. The chief harpooner opened his mouth to say something, but no sound came forth. The four stopped and stared at me like men who suffered from a terrible shock. I regarded them with surprise.

"'What's the matter?' I asked. 'You look as if you had seen a ghost.'

"'Oh, lord!' gasped the harpooner. 'Worse than that, sir; something awful has happened.'

"'What has happened?' I asked, curiously, perhaps lightly, for I was far from suspecting the terrible calamity that overshadowed the bark.

"'All hands are stark dead in the fok's'l,' replied the harpooner, with a groan, as the horror of the sight he and his companions had witnessed came over him again.

"'What nonsense are you talking?' I exclaimed, almost angrily, for I could see no sense in such a declaration.

"'No nonsense, sir, as Heaven is my judge,' he replied solemnly. 'Go and see for yourself. Every man jack of them is stiff and stark, as though they had been struck down of a sudden with the plague.'

"I stared at the man. He was clearly in dead earnest, and the looks of the other three were on a par with his own. I was dumfounded. I could not believe such an absurd declaration. Yet neither could I understand what had given these men the idea voiced by the harpooner. The easiest and quickest way to settle the matter was to go into the fok's'l myself and see what had given rise to the men's fright. I was so satisfied that the captain, the chief mate

and the crew were out hunting for us that the idea of finding any corpses in the fok's'l was the last thing in my mind.

"Is the slush lamp lighted?" I asked the harpooner.

"It is, sir, but it's very dim; better take a lantern."

"I went into the pantry and took down the lantern that hung there, lighted it, and, followed by the three men and the apprentice, started across the snow-covered deck, which I noticed showed the tracks of but a few boots, and walked through the door into the space under the half-deck. I held up the lantern and looked around. The others, apparently loath to come in, gathered about the entrance. The sight that met my startled eyes fairly paralyzed me. The harpooner had told nothing but the truth. In the bunks and on the floor, in every kind of attitude, with distorted countenances, lay the rest of the crew—dead.

"One look was enough to convince me that not one of them had the breath of life in him.

"Good Heaven!" I exclaimed. "What does this mean?"

"I looked each one over, including the invalid cook, who lay in his bunk. All of the crew, except the four who had been out with me, were there. No, I was wrong. One man who belonged there was missing—Steve Williams. Had he escaped the fate which in some inexplicable way had befallen the others? Then I thought of the galley, which looked as silent and deserted as the rest of the vessel. He must be in there, and dead, too.

"I walked out of the fok's'l in a dazed state, and my companions followed me over to the galley. Throwing open the door I flashed the light in, fully expecting to see the corpse of the acting cook in there. But no such gruesome sight greeted my eyes. Williams wasn't there. It was with a feeling of relief that I turned away from the galley; but the next instant my heart went cold with the sudden thought—what about the captain, the chief mate and the carpenter? Where were they? I had not seen a sign of them since I came aboard.

"Come with me," I said hoarsely to my companions, and I made straight for the cabin again, resolved to know the worst at once.

"As we passed through the passage I stopped and opened the door of the carpenter's room. Holding the lantern above my head I looked in. The carpenter lay curled up in his bunk. I called him by name, but he never moved. I stepped in and looked at him. He was dead as a coffin nail. I must have looked like a ghost when I walked out, for the four looked at me with frightened eyes. They seemed to understand what I had seen, and the knowledge that we five had returned to a charnel ship was almost too much for them.

"He's dead, too," I said in a hollow tone.

"An' the cap'n and chief mate——" said the harpooner.

"Don't," I said, leaning up against the wall of the passage and staring through into the silent cabin, brightly lighted by the lamp.

"Every one is dead," said the harpooner in a fierce way, as though he considered it a personal affront that all on board should die while we five were lost in the snow and darkness.

"No," I replied, in a listless tone, "one man is not accounted for."

"The four looked at each other and then at me.

"You mean Steve Williams?" said the harpooner.

"I nodded. 'He's not in the fok's'l; nor in the galley; neither is he in the pantry,' I said. 'He must have left the bark.'

"Why should he be the only one to get away?"

"I shrugged my shoulders. I was too stunned by the wholesale tragedy to reason the matter out at that moment. While the men were muttering together, and the apprentice stood by with a look of awe on his face, I started on again. I went first to the mate's door and looked in. I saw what I was expecting—the chief mate lying motionless in his berth. I felt that it was useless to go in and look at him. I knew he was dead, just as I felt convinced that the captain was also dead in his state-room. So I closed the door and entered the captain's room. The lamp was burning in the bracket. Captain Matthews was seated in a chair beside a small desk to which he had apparently dragged himself with a great effort from his bunk. A sheet of note paper lay on the desk, and a pencil was held in the rigid fingers of the corpse. I picked up the paper, for I saw there was writing on it. I read what the dying man had written with his last conscious effort. I felt my hair rise under my hat as I comprehended the fearful truth. This is what it said: 'The plum pudding was loaded with arsenic, and every soul aboard, with the exception of the murderer, is poisoned. All will die, if they are not already dead. Steve Williams has done this. He has mur——'

"There is no use of prolonging this narrative. I did not expect to say so much about it when I started in, but the story seemed to write itself. We buried the captain, Mr. Ogden, the carpenter, and the crew in the snow—all side by side in a row, and as we did it the harpooner cursed Steve Williams, and swore he'd have his life if they ever met.

"We have stayed by the bark till the polar summer has come around again—we couldn't do otherwise. What has become of Williams we know not, neither do we care. If he had come back we would have given him a short shift for his life. Wherever he went we know that he carried a good supply of provisions with him—enough to last him a long time, with economy.

"We have held several councils together, and we are satisfied that we cannot move the bark out of the creek. The chance of rescue here is too remote for us to pin our hope to it. We cannot bear the idea of spending another dreary winter in this place, and so, with three months more of daylight before us, we have decided to abandon the vessel and make our way south, expecting, within a month, to strike some village, whence we can secure means of transportation to a port that will connect us with civilization.

"I leave this letter, with the bark's log book, so that if the vessel is found the cause of her abandonment in a seaworthy state may be fully understood. As it is not at all certain that we will survive the tramp we are about to undertake, though we are encouraged to believe that we will, I request that the persons who find this letter and the log book will, after reading the former, transmit both to the owners, Messrs. Grigsby & Co., New Bedford, Mass., U. S. A., as soon as circumstances will permit.

"HOWARD HOYT, Second Mate."

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER ORDERS.

Hal read the letter from start to finish with the same interest he would have shown in a thrilling chapter of some book of fiction.

It was not till he reached the writer's signature that he began to realize that what he had just read was no fiction, but a horrible fact.

"Great Scott!" he muttered. "What a scoundrel! To poison the captain, chief mate and most of the crew of the vessel which picked him up at sea, thereby saving his rascally life. I wonder where he went to after committing that fearful crime? The writer of the letter says he took a lot of provisions with him, so I suppose he sneaked down the coast to the first village, and there got an Esquimau to guide him to some port where he could escape from the island. Well, he's had six or more months to get away in, if he didn't get into trouble and turn up his toes."

Hal reread some parts of the letter while waiting for the captain to return.

Suddenly he gave a kind of gasp and looked up.

"What if this man, who calls himself Bill Blaine, whom we took off of the iceberg yesterday, should prove to be the murderer alluded to in this letter?" he said to himself. "By thunder! I believe he is the same fellow. He hasn't given a square explanation of how he came to be on the berg. The yarn he spun Joe, Nat and me was too absurd for a reasonable person to credit. The idea of a vessel being lifted up a hundred feet in the air out of the water by the turning over of the berg, and then meeting her fate by sliding down in another direction, while Blaine saved himself by hanging on to the handle of an auger driven into the ice. And then the reason he gave for the vessel anchoring herself to the berg—that there was a professor aboard who wanted to hunt in the ice for a blind fish, called a spellidiffer, that was to be caught by boring a hole in the ice and sprinkling fine tobacco around the edge of the hole. I wonder if the rascal took us chaps for blamed fools to swallow such rot?"

Hal's reflections were interrupted by the return of the captain.

"Well, you've read the letter," said the skipper.

"Yes, sir; and I never read a more horrible story," replied the boy.

"Does it suggest anything to your mind?"

"Yes, sir. It has given rise to a strong suspicion that the man we took off the berg yesterday, and who says his name is Bill Blaine, is really the Steve Williams mentioned in the letter as the murderer of the captain, chief mate, and most of the crew of the bark John Brown," said Hal.

"That is exactly what I suspect myself," said Captain Waldron. "The fellow has a wicked look, and the story he told me to account for his presence on the berg seems highly improbable."

"It certainly does, though it's not near so bad as the yarn he gave me and my friends. I wonder why he told two different stories? He ought to have had sense enough to make up a reasonable one and stick to it."

"Some men make fools of themselves under any circumstances," said the captain. "A criminal usually invites his own undoing through some mistake, the significance of which he does not realize at the time."

"Well, sir, what are you going to do about this man?"

"I can do nothing as yet. I have taken you into my confidence with the view of using you as a bait. I want you to try and trap him."

"I'm ready to do anything you propose, but I'm afraid I'll have my work cut out. He's a ticklish fellow to monkey with. If he should suspect what I am driving at——"

"You mustn't give him any reason to suspect. He can't have any idea that we have any knowledge of the tragedy that happened on board the John Brown last Christmas, nearly eight months ago."

"He knows that the second mate and four of the crew escaped the fate he had prepared for all."

"It is not unlikely that he believes they perished in the snowstorm, for they did not regain the bark for hours after the storm ceased, and it is pretty certain that the murderer did not leave the vessel, with his bag of provisions, until he was certain the storm was over for good. In any event he does not count on suspicion resting on him, though he is trying to hide his real identity, which is a natural thing for him to do."

"You want me to try and find out if he really is Steve Williams?"

"Yes. The most important link will be to establish the fact that he is a capable cook."

"I wouldn't like to take the risk of eating anything he cooked. We have arsenic aboard to feed cockroaches with."

"He would scarcely try to repeat such a trick without some powerful motive."

"If he gets the idea in his head that he is under suspicion that will be motive enough."

"He mustn't get that idea. You must be very cautious in your efforts to trap him. You mustn't drop a hint of what you learned from that letter to anybody, particularly your friends. They would be sure to canvass the subject between themselves, and with you, and the rascal might hear the talk. I do not intend to tell my officers at present. Only you and I now possess the terrible secret, unless the second mate of the bark and the hands who escaped the tragedy have reached civilization. I fear they have not, else we should have heard from them at the village. The place is not over 15 miles from the creek where the John Brown lies abandoned, and surely they ought to have covered that distance in the time which has elapsed since they left the vessel."

"The clergyman told me that there is another village about seventy miles up the coast," said Hal.

"I know. Misque told me about it. He passed through it going and coming when he last went north. It was on this trip he discovered the bark abandoned in the creek. He found no trace of the survivors along his route, nor at that village, so it looks as if they missed the shore line, wandered off into the interior, and ultimately perished," said the captain.

"That would be rough if they did after their lucky escape from the poison plot. Maybe they returned to the bark and are there now."

"I hardly think so. However, I intend to sail up to the creek and see if I can get the vessel out. I expect to send out an expedition to look for the survivors. I have arranged with Misque to bring sleds and dogs aboard the brig. He and another Esquimau will go along."

"If this Bill Blaine is really Steve Williams, as I feel convinced he is, he may try to skip when he learns where we are going."

"I'll not announce our destination until we have got under way, and maybe not then, unless the crew show dissatisfaction over the course we are following."

"I think it is likely they will, sir, for they've been kicking ever since we left our regular whaling grounds. The capture of the two whales yesterday afternoon put them in better humor, because they count on the brig turning southward after the blubber has been tried out," said Hal.

"They have no real right to be disaffected. They signed for the cruise without reference to the fishing-grounds. I can take the brig as far north as my judgment dictates without consulting anybody. I am the master of this ship, and my authority aboard is supreme. If any man starts to make trouble he is liable to be put in irons and kept there till he promises to behave."

The rattle of dishes in the cabin showed that the man who performed the general duties of steward was getting ready to serve dinner.

The captain, having said all he had to say for the present to Hal, told him to go forward and get his dinner, which at that moment was being handed out to the crew.

"And remember, not a word about the John Brown," he concluded. "Keep your eye on Blaine. Get into conversation with him whenever you can and take note of any slip he may make. When you have anything to report, come aft, and we will retire to this room, the privacy of which we can depend on."

"All right, sir. I will do my best. It won't be my fault if I fail to show Bill Blaine up in his true colors."

Hal left the captain's state-room and went forward, where he was just in time to get his share of the rations the cook was serving out to the men.

CHAPTER VIII.

SYMPTOMS OF MUTINY.

"What have you been doing with yourself since you came aboard?" asked Nat, as the three boys sat on the floor of the fore-castle and began to eat their dinner.

"Helping the skipper in the cabin," replied Hal, in a careless way.

"You had a snap then," said Joe. "Nat and I have been tending the kettle, and deuced dirty, smoky work it is. Your turn will come this afternoon, I guess, if your work is over in the cabin."

At that moment, Bill Blaine, who didn't seem to get on very well with the men, slouched over and sat down near them.

"How are you, my hearties?" he said.

"How are you yourself?" replied Joe. "You find this place better than the iceberg, don't you?"

"I'll allow that I do, shipmate," returned the derelict; "but all things considered the berg warn't so bad. After livin' six months on it I kind'r got used to it. At any rate I've been in wuss places in my time."

"So you really were six months on that berg?" said Joe, who didn't believe any such thing. "Are you sure you don't mean weeks or days?"

"I mean what I said—months. I might have been six years on it if you folks hadn't seen me and took me off."

"Six years! How would you have lived so long as that, on spelldiffers?"

"Never you mind, shipmate. I kin live where other persons turn up their toes. When you've knocked 'round the world as I have you'll understand lots more than you do now."

"I suppose you've learned to do a great many things since you took to the sea?" said Hal, in an off-hand way.

"I'll allow I have," replied the sailor.

"I heard you tell the cook this morning that you could make better coffee than what he served out to us. I guess you didn't mean that."

"I did mean it, for I kin do it," said Blaine with some energy in his tone. "Do you call that muddy lookin' stuff he served out to us coffee?"

"I don't know what else it is. A man who can beat Pete making coffee must be a mighty good cook."

"I kin cook better'n any nigger that stands in two shoes," said Blaine.

"Oh, I say, don't give us anything like that."

"Don't you believe it?" roared the sailor, with an unpleasant look.

"You aren't a ship's cook, are you? I thought you were a regular foremast hand."

"I'm a regular A. B., but I kin cook first-class, too."

"Ever serve as cook aboard ship?"

"Mebbe I have and mebbe I haven't," replied Blaine, with a wary grin.

"That's not a convincing answer. I guess you didn't."

"You kin guess what you please. If I get a chance I'll show you chaps what I kin do in the galley."

"If we should need a cook I'll tell the cap'n to call on you," laughed Hal, satisfied now that Bill Blaine and the rascally Steve Williams were one and the same person.

That afternoon Hal was stationed with his two friends at the trying-out pots, and dirty work it was, as he well knew from previous experience.

However, he wasn't a lad to complain at what he couldn't avoid.

He took things as they came, and made the best of them.

His good nature and readiness to make himself useful at anything had long since made him a favorite with the men, and they did not resent the fact that he stood on such familiar terms with the captain.

All knew that his father had been the captain of a whaler in his time, and a life-long friend of Captain Waldron's, so it was no more than natural that the skipper of the Dan Tucker should take an interest in the stalwart, plucky boy, who, on account of adverse circumstances, had been compelled to get out into the world and earn his own living,

and had elected to ship before the mast with his father's old friend.

The only person aboard who had taken a dislike to him, and made no bones about showing it, was the second mate, Mark Noakes.

Noakes was a capable officer, but not an agreeable man.

He had no respect for a foremast hand, and was accustomed to treat them pretty much as some overseers did the negro on the Southern plantations before the Civil War.

On board the Dan Tucker he had to haul in his horns somewhat, for Captain Waldron was opposed to brutality, but nevertheless he carried matters as far as he dared, and the men hated him accordingly.

Next morning Captain Waldron went ashore again, and he took the boys with him as before.

On this occasion Hal remained in the boat so that Nat and Joe could have a chance to see the village, and stretch their legs on the dry land.

The captain's business was with Misque this time, to see if he would be ready to embark early on the following morning, when he proposed to resume his course northward.

Misque reported that he would be ready, and introduced the Esquimaux, who was to accompany him, whose name was Guilik.

As it happened this was the native who alleged he had seen the chest of gold money in a hole or underground cave of the crater near the village of Tamask.

The fact that he failed to find the place again, when he guided a party bent on taking possession of it, cast a strong doubt on his story, but he still adhered to his original declaration, and insisted that the treasure was there.

The captain and the two boys remained a couple of hours in the village, during which time Hal amused himself trying to hold a pow-wow with the Esquimaux who gathered at the edge of the ice, most of them interested in watching the work that was going on aboard the brig.

On their return to the vessel the boys were put to work at the kettles again, relieving the men who had been stationed there.

The big whale had by this time been denuded of its blubber, the fins and tail also cut off, and lastly the whalebone cut out of its mouth.

For the information of the reader we will state that the whalebone is placed in two rows in the mouth, and is used instead of teeth, to masticate the food, and to catch the minute animals floating in the water on which the whale feeds.

Ten or twelve feet is the average size of this bone.

The men were now busy at work on the small whale on the other side of the brig.

The huge mass was turned round and round by the kent-tackle, so that the whole coat of fat could be removed.

The carcass of the big whale, which the whalers called the "krang," was cast adrift, and it floated away, the birds and sharks making a hearty meal off of it.

Sometimes when the tackles are removed the carcass sinks, and the fish at the bottom are alone the better for it.

Captain Waldron calculated that the big whale would net the brig \$2,500, while the smaller one would foot up between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

Work on both days was continued well into the night hours, in order to finish as soon as possible.

As the sun did not drop below the horizon at any time, they had all the light wanted to push the job through.

The second "krang" was sent adrift, and nothing remained but to finish the trying-out, and this was continued all night, attended to by each watch in turn.

After breakfast next morning the fires were allowed to go out, the deck cleaned up as well as could be, and things resumed their former aspect.

Boats were sent to bring off the two Esquimaux and the dogs and sleds.

This occasioned the crew much surprise, for they could not understand the meaning of it.

That they didn't approve of it was evident.

It indicated that the brig was bound further north, with a land expedition in prospect.

When sail was set, and the vessel pointed her nose up the coast, the men began to kick in earnest, but they confined their dissatisfaction among themselves.

Hal was interviewed by several of the men, who thought he might know what the skipper was up to, but he declared that he was as much in the dark about the matter as they were.

This was not the truth, but the boy had his orders, and he had to obey them.

Hal noticed that Bill Blaine showed some uneasiness when he saw that the vessel was not going south, as he had calculated on.

The fellow circulated around among the crew and added his howl to the general discontent.

To help matters along he reported that the ice was very thick further north in the Strait, and that it was continually breaking up under the warmth of the sun and coming together again in other places.

Everyone knew that such a condition of affairs was a great menace to a vessel, which stood a good chance of being caught between floes and crushed.

The crew reasoned that not only would their lives be endangered, but if the brig went to the bottom the cargo would be lost, and they would be large financial sufferers, in common with the officers and owners.

The latter might be able to stand this, but the crew did not feel as if they could, nor did they consider it a fair risk for them to encounter.

Besides, they strongly objected to being obliged to pass the long winter in those latitudes.

Blaine agreed with everything they said, and kept on adding fuel to the flame of discontent by making out things in the worst possible light.

He insisted that he ought to be regarded as good authority, for he had come down the coast himself on the iceberg, and he considered himself mighty lucky in getting out of his predicament.

Although the men did not cotton to Blaine, for he was not a person to invite confidence, they readily listened to his arguments, since they fitted in so well with their own sentiments, and the result was the feeling in the fore-castle against the captain's plans grew quite intense.

So much so, indeed, that Hal believed it to be his duty to report the state of affairs to the chief mate.

As a foremast hand himself he did not like to take sides against his companions, every man Jack of whom treated him well, but he felt they were going beyond the limit of their rights, and that they appeared to be ripe for trouble.

Knowing the captain's object, which he regarded as both just and humane, he was naturally satisfied with the vessel's course.

By reporting the state of things in the fore-castle he thought the captain would deem it wise to explain his plans to the crew, and appeal to their feelings to pull with him instead of against discipline.

The day passed, however, without anything happening out of the way.

The men had little to do, and this gave them more time to gather below and vent their feelings on the subject uppermost in their thoughts.

Bill Blaine showed himself to be a regular "sea lawyer," and was obtaining a considerable ascendancy in the council.

It looked to the boys that if he got full control there would be something doing, and nothing good could be expected of him.

CHAPTER IX.

BLAINE BREAKS OUT.

When Captain Waldron came on deck in the morning, in his thick pilot jacket and fur cap, with huge ear-flaps, the first thing he did was to look at the sky.

The weather, which had been fine for a week or more, had changed during the night, and the firmament was obscured by banks of heavy clouds.

Before he came up the skipper had looked at the thermometer, but it did not indicate any sudden change, though it had dropped a little.

"What do you think of the weather, Mr. Noakes?" he asked the second mate.

"Looks kind of doubtful to me, sir," replied the officer.

"The thermometer does not show any pronounced change."

"I dare say things will clear up after awhile."

"I hope so."

"The men appear to be very sullen this morning, sir. I fear trouble from them."

"Trouble, eh? Have any of them expressed dissatisfaction to you?"

"No, sir; but their feelings are plainly to be seen in their faces and actions. They appear to be opposed to going farther north."

"Who is the captain of this ship?"

"You are, sir."

"Very good. I propose to take the brig where I choose. I am merely carrying out certain instructions I received from the owners. You can tell the men that if they should speak to you on the subject, to refer them to me."

"I think that chap we took off the iceberg is fomenting trouble."

Captain Waldron was not surprised to hear this.

He had already been warned by Hal of Blaine's attitude

and tactics, and was prepared to put the fellow in irons at the first evidence of insubordination on his part.

"I know," replied the captain. "He has been telling the men that if the brig goes much further north she'll be caught and crushed in the ice, or at the best we will be cut off by floes and obliged to winter in this region."

"There is always the chance of such a thing happening at the close of summer."

"I look for another month of fine weather and clear water."

The second mate, who privately sympathized with the sentiment felt by the men, made no reply.

He was just as eager as they were to see the brig's nose pointed to the south.

Hal was at the wheel.

The captain walked over to him.

"Anything new to report, Hal?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Yes, sir. I'm afraid matters are coming to a head in the fok's'l, sir. The crew intend to send a delegation to you this morning to inform you that they object to going further north."

"They do, eh?" replied Captain Waldron, grimly.

"They will ask you why the two Esquimaux, the sleds and the dogs are aboard."

"What else?"

"If your explanation is not satisfactory to them they propose to insist that you put the Esquimaux and their property ashore and alter the brig's course to the south."

"Insist, eh?"

"If you refuse to fall in with their wishes there is some talk of locking you in your state-room, and compelling the officer on duty to turn the brig's head about."

"Rank mutiny, by thunder!" exclaimed the captain, angrily. "I suppose Blaine is at the bottom of all this?"

"He is. He has worked the men into a nasty humor."

"Do they recognize him as their leader?"

"No, I don't think they do, for he's not popular with them. Still, he has obtained quite an ascendancy in the fok's'l since we resumed our way north."

"The scoundrel! I shall put him in irons at the first excuse."

The captain walked up and down the weather side of the poop, and it was plain he was not a little disturbed by the news Hal had told him.

Presently the brig's bell was struck eight times, indicating the end of the morning watch.

The chief mate came on deck and the second mate went below.

One of the crew came aft to relieve Hal at the wheel.

Just then the steward stuck his head up the companion ladder and called the skipper to breakfast.

As Hal went forward he noticed a thickening of the atmosphere in the northeast, which soon developed into a sea fog.

This, with the other impediments in the shape of icebergs and floating blocks of ice, made navigation more than ordinarily difficult, and these conditions, you may well believe, did not add to the good nature of the crew.

At breakfast the men were much disturbed by the fre-

quent unpleasant bumping of floating blocks of ice against the brig's side.

Sometimes the shock was so heavy as to shake the vessel from keel to truck.

"You see, my hearties, what you have to expect if we keep on," said Blaine, looking around the forecastle; "only you'll get it wuss and more of it."

"Well, it's understood that a delegation is to wait on the cap'n this mornin' sometime to express our feelin's," said a sailor named Butler. "We might just as well decide now who's goin' to face the music."

"I s'pose you'll be one, and do the talkin'," said another hand. "And maybe Blaine is anxious to get on the firin' line, too."

"It ain't my place to chip in," replied Blaine. "I ain't a reg'lar member of the crew, not havin' signed articles."

"You've been doin' a whole lot of talkin' just the same," said another. "It was you proposed the delegation."

"What if I did? I done it for the good of the crew, didn't I?"

"Well, it's my opinion you ought to take the lead."

"Tryin' to crawl out yourself," sneered Blaine, in an ugly way.

"Don't you go makin' insinervations ag'in me, or I'll knock the daylight out'r you," roared the other, whose name was Ryan.

"What's that? You knock the daylights out'r me? I could lick two like you and not know I was doin' anythin'," cried Blaine.

As the words left his mouth Ryan flung his plate, which took Blaine in the face.

That ruffian was on his feet in a moment with his case-knife in his hand.

He flung himself so quickly on Ryan that the man had no chance to save himself, and he would have been stabbed but for the presence of mind and pluck of Hal.

The boy darted at Blaine and seized the wrist of the hand that held the knife.

Blaine turned on Hal with a terrible imprecation and struck him in the face with his left fist.

Hal maintained his grip, however, and Nat and Joe flew to his assistance.

As the other two laid hold of Blaine, Ryan got on his feet and kicked the knife out of the derelict's hands.

The rest of the crew, resenting Blaine's murderous tactics, seized him, and battered him badly before they let up on him.

He staggered out of the forecastle, muttering dark threats, and made his way to a bucket full of water that stood beside the galley.

He never looked more villainous than he did at that moment, with blood running down his face from the scalp and other wounds inflicted by the crew.

Shaking his fist at the door of the forecastle, he swore to have revenge on all concerned, but more particularly on Hal, who had balked him in his attempt on Ryan's life.

Then he began to wash the blood from his countenance and his wounds.

In the meantime Ryan thanked Hal for saving his life, and also Nat and Joe for chipping in at the critical moment.

The rest of the crew also complimented Hal on his nervy conduct, and there was no doubt but he had risen many degrees in their estimation.

They denounced Blaine as a ruffianly rascal and swore to have nothing to do with him in the future.

After breakfast they resumed the discussion of the subject uppermost in their minds, and finally Butler, Ryan and another sailor agreed to wait upon the captain and state their grievance.

As the fog was now pretty thick, and things were very misty on deck, they decided to wait until the weather cleared somewhat.

The captain when he came on deck again ordered the brig hove to until the fog passed away.

The thumping of the floating ice continued at intervals, but it was not so bad as while the vessel was making headway.

It was not till after dinner had been served out and eaten that the fog lifted and the sun was seen again in a fairly clear sky.

Then the delegation walked aft, followed at a distance by the rest of the crew, and Hal was sent into the cabin to ask the skipper to come out.

Captain Waldron, after learning from the boy what he might expect, appeared at the passage door and confronted the men.

"Well," he said, "what have you to say to me?"

"Me, Ryan and Davis have been app'inted a committee to say a few words on a mater that concerns all hands," said Butler, acting spokesman.

"Say them, then," replied the captain, quietly.

"You see, sir, the hold's nearly full," continued Butler. "A whale or two more will fill the rest of the barrels, and then we expect you'll make all sail for home. While we allow there's whale 'round here we'd take 'em further south. We don't see no sense in you keepin' to the north like you're doin'. We old salts know that you're takin' chances of bein' caught in the frost, and then we'd be obliged to stay ice-bound all winter, which ain't no pleasant prospect, seein' that we've been nearly two years away from port up to the present, and we're anxious to get home and see our families ag'in. So, sir, we respectfully ask of you to 'bout ship and get back into less dangerous water."

"Have you got through?" asked Captain Waldron.

"That depends on your answer, sir."

"Well, my answer is that I am the master of this brig, and that when I see fit to turn her head south I will do so. I have a very important reason for keeping to our present course, and so I propose to do so. You men will please remember that you shipped for the cruise, and not for any particular destination. When we have reached the point I am aiming at, and have performed the duty that rests on my shoulders, we will turn our faces south, but not till then. That's all I have to say on the subject," said the skipper, in a resolute tone.

The delegation looked at each other and seemed at a loss how to proceed.

Finally Butler said:

"P'raps you'll give us an idee how much further north you are expectin' to go?"

"Maybe 100 miles, maybe more; I can't tell you exactly."

The answer didn't hit the delegation favorably.

The rest of the crew heard the captain's words, and a murmur of disapproval rose from their ranks.

"P'raps you'll tell us why you took the two Esquimaux, the dogs and the sleds aboard at the village below," said Butler.

"You'll find out in due time," replied Captain Waldron.

"We want to find out now," shouted a voice among the crew.

"You have my answer," returned the skipper. "Mr. Noakes," to the mate who was standing at the rail above, "put the brig on her course again."

With those words he turned around and walked back through the pasage to the cabin.

The delegation rejoined the crew, and all hands, except the watch on deck, re-entered the forecastle in an ugly frame of mind.

CHAPTER X.

BLAINE UP TO MISCHIEF.

The brig was put on her course, the watch working in a dogged and reluctant way.

Hal and Joe, who were in the second mate's complement, were the only ones to go about their work with their customary cheerfulness.

It only took a short pull on the braces to work the yards around in the right position to meet the wind as the helmsman shifted the rudder in conformity with the maneuver, and within a couple of minutes the brig was once more ploughing her way northward with a fresh breeze in her favor.

"There'll be trouble over this before long," said Joe to Hal, as they backed up against the sunny side of the galley.

"I'm afraid so," replied Hal. "Captain Waldron might have explained his intentions to the men, and won them over, but he considered that beneath his dignity as commander. It is the crew's duty to obey without question."

"The crew, ourselves excepted, aren't looking at it in that light," said Joe. "Here comes Nat."

Nat Vickers came over to where they were standing.

"The men put me out of the fok's'l," he said.

"They did?" exclaimed Hal. "What for?"

"Because they didn't want me to hear what they said."

"Of course. They're not taking it very cheerfully."

"I suppose not. It hits them hard. They might just as well grin and bear it, for there's no use of them kicking against a stone wall. The captain knows his own business, and the crew doesn't count in it," said Hal.

"I'm thinking there's going to be trouble, for the men are in a savage mood."

"It will be foolish for the men to break out. The law is all in favor of the skipper, and they will only get themselves in trouble if they refuse to do their duty. Last night I heard them figure on locking Captain Waldron in his state-room and making whichever mate was on duty change the course of the brig to the south. That would be an act of mutiny, and would render all taking part in it liable to

imprisonment when they came within the jurisdiction of an American marine court," said Hal. "At any rate, I warned the captain about it, so they are not likely to catch him napping."

"Well, my watch is mighty angry over the captain's refusal to turn back," said Nat. "And I dare say the members of your watch are just as much put out, for all hands, ourselves excepted, are in the same boat. By the way, where is Blaine?"

"I couldn't tell you," replied Hal. "I haven't seen him since the scrap."

"We'll have to watch out that he doesn't get back at us, you, particularly," said Nat. "He's a bad rooster."

"You don't know how bad he is," said Hal, in a significant tone.

"I think we all had a pretty good illustration of what he is capable of. He would certainly have knifed Ryan, and probably killed him, but for you. Has the affair been reported to the captain?"

"I guess not. I'll tell him the circumstances at the first chance I have. He will probably have the rascal put in irons," said Hal.

"He ought to be put where he can't do any more harm. He's sure to make some trouble if he is allowed to go around. No telling but he might use his knife again, and with better effect."

Navigation grew worse as they proceeded.

The Strait was full of floating ice, through which the brig had to push her way.

Late in the afternoon the carpenter reported a leak in the forward hold, and he and his assistant went down to fix it up.

One of the outer planks had been sprung, and the end had damaged an inner one, which let in the water.

The crew learned about it and another conference was called.

Hal was summoned and directed to tell the chief mate that they would refuse to obey further orders unless the brig was headed south.

The boy carried the message to Mr. Flint, and he immediately reported the fact to the captain.

The skipper came on the poop and called the crew aft.

The state of things was serious and he decided to tell the crew the object he had in view in working north.

So he made a short speech in which he stated that he had orders to look for the bark John Brown, owned by the firm to which the Dan Tucker belonged, and her officers and crew.

He was careful not to let out a hint of the tragedy he had learned through the letter.

He said he had received reliable information that the vessel had been abandoned in a creek about 150 miles north of the village they had just left.

As she was nearly full of oil he intended to try and pull her out into open water, and sail her down the coast to a port in Iceland, where she would be safe till a crew was sent to take charge of her and sail her home.

It was also his purpose to send out an expedition to try and find the officers and crew that had been compelled to abandon her, and from whom nothing had been heard.

Having made this explanation, he hoped the crew would

see things in the right light and go about their duty as cheerfully as heretofore they had done.

The men received the statement in silence.

The captain's words evidently made an impression on them, though they showed a reluctance to fall in with his views.

Hal and his two friends tried to influence the men by shouting "Three cheers for Captain Waldron!"

A feeble response only was elicited.

"Now you understand that I do not mean to go south just yet," said the captain. "I do not mean to desert our friends, while there is a possibility of saving them; so return to your duty."

"How do you know they're alive?" asked Butler.

"I don't know, but as long as I don't know they are dead it is my duty to hunt for them," replied Captain Waldron.

"If you go huntin' for them we'll be caught in the ice ourselves, and then we'll be as bad off as they were afore they left the bark," said Butler.

"We have a month before us of clear water."

"This looks like it, doesn't it?" replied the sailor, waving his arm toward the hundreds of pieces of ice floating all around the brig. "Bill Blaine says we will surely get stuck if we go further north."

"Bill Blaine is not a good authority on the subject."

"He ought to be, for he says he came from there."

"Well, I've explained the situation to you, and I can't do any more," said the captain. "You're bound by law to obey orders until the cruise is ended. If you refuse to do your duty you can be punished for it, and that wouldn't be pleasant for you."

The crew walked away and gathered in groups, canvassing the captain's plans.

They finally came to the conclusion to hold off for a day or two and see how things went.

They recognized that it would be a serious matter to refuse to work the brig.

It would not only render them liable to punishment, but it would endanger the vessel, the cargo and their own lives.

As the case stood they were on the horns of a dilemma, and they wished they had put their feet down immediately after the last two whales were captured.

Bill Blaine hadn't been seen for several hours, and the boys wondered where he had taken himself to.

"He ought to be looked up," said Hal. "He may be up to some mischief, and he is capable of doing a lot of injury."

"What could he do?" asked Joe.

"It is hard to say just what the rascal might attempt. He is down on the crew now, and he wouldn't hesitate to take revenge on them, even if he had go afloat on another iceberg."

"He isn't in the fok's'l, as far as I have noticed," said Nat; "and I don't see him anywhere around deck. He certainly wouldn't dare venture into the cabin. He is probably curled up in one of the boats."

"Let's look for him," suggested Hal.

"He might stick one of us with his knife if we butted in on him," said Joe.

"We must watch out that he doesn't," said Hal.

They looked into each of the boats in turn, but found no trace of the ruffian.

By that time the cook called the crew to get their supper.

"He'll come after his grub," said Nat, "for it isn't likely he'll care to go hungry."

Nat was right.

They saw Blaine issue from a dark corner of the fore-castle, where he had been stowed away behind a heavy beam, put in to support that part of the vessel.

He got his rations and ate his supper on deck near the door of the galley.

After that he put his pipe in his mouth, leaned over the port bulwark and started to smoke.

He belonged to the second mate's watch, but had not been on duty that afternoon.

If the mate missed him he made no remark, and the rest of the watch didn't care.

The second mate's watch went on duty again for a two-hour spell after supper.

This was called the second dog watch, from 6 to 8 o'clock.

Blaine remained at the bulwark smoking, while Hal and Joe stood near the galley.

The boys kept their eyes on him, but he never moved except once when he was required to lay hold of a brace to help swing one of the yards around.

When the other watch came on deck at eight o'clock he entered the fore-castle with the others and sought his bunk.

Hal fell asleep almost as soon as he lay down, but an unpleasant dream awoke him about ten o'clock.

He turned over and lay with his face out.

The daylight that prevailed all night shone in through the door and lighted up the fore-castle better than a lamp would have done.

As the boy's eyes roved around he saw a figure, which he recognized as Blaine's, kneeling beside a trap in the deck which communicated with the forepart of the hold.

Hal saw him lift the trap, look cautiously around, and then descend into the depths, pulling the trap down after him.

"He's up to mischief," was the boy's thought.

He jumped up and aroused Joe, who slept near him.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe, sleepily.

"Get up and I'll tell you."

Joe sat up and stared at him.

"What's the trouble? It isn't time to go on duty again, is it? I didn't hear the bell," he said.

"No. I want to tell you about Blaine."

"Blaine! What about him?" asked Joe, now wide-awake.

"He's gone into the hold, through the fok's'l trap."

"The dickens he has! What business has he down there?"

"None that's honest. He's up to some deviltry, I'll swear. I wouldn't be surprised if he intended to set the brig on fire. If she once got a start she'd burn like tinder with her timbers so soaked with oil."

"Notify the cap'n."

"I want you to go aft and tell the chief mate, who is on duty."

"And you—what are you going to do?"

"Follow the rascal, and prevent him from getting his work in."

Joe pulled on his pants, coat and boots and started.

Hal glided to the trap, opened it and looked down.

All was dark as the ace of spades down in the hold.

To go down there he felt was running a great risk of meeting with a thrust from Blaine's knife in the dark, but he was a brave and resolute boy, and did not hesitate on that account.

Leaving the trap open, down he went by the ladder, which was nailed in place.

At the bottom he crouched down and looked around.

He heard a noise many yards away, close to the bulkhead.

From the sound Blaine appeared to be engaged ripping a plank out of place.

"He's trying to make his way into the main hold where the oil barrels are," thought the boy.

Presently a match flared up and Hal saw that two planks had been taken out of the bulkhead, leaving a space large enough for a man to crawl through.

Holding the match in his fingers Blaine shoved one of his legs through the opening.

The rest of his body was following when he dropped the match and it went out.

Hal saw that not a moment was to be lost, so he sprang forward and seized the rascal by the arm, pinning him in the opening.

CHAPTER XI.

HAL SIGHS THE JOHN BROWN.

The fellow uttered an imprecation, and struggled to free himself, but he did not succeed, in spite of his strength.

"What are you doing here, Bill Blaine?" demanded Hal.

"Ha! It is you, is it?" cried the sailor, recognizing his voice.

"Yes."

"You've been spyin' on me, blast you!"

"No, but I woke up and saw you slip through the trap. You had no business in the hold, so I followed you to see what you were up to."

"Let go my arm or it will be worse for you."

"Not much. What game are you up to?"

"None of your blamed business."

"I'm making it my business."

"I'll fix you in a moment."

Hal knew the rascal was feeling for his knife with his left hand.

It was a critical moment for the boy.

At this juncture there came the sound of men's feet on the planking above, and presently a lantern was flashed down into the hold.

"Where are you, Hal?" asked Mr. Flint's voice.

"Here, sir. I've got the fellow, but he's trying to use his knife on me," replied the young sailor.

The chief mate lost no time in sliding down the ladder, and he was followed by several of the watch, with Joe coming in the rear.

The flash of the mate's lantern revealed Blaine in the act of making a drive at Hal with his knife, but in rather an awkward way.

The boy caught his wrist and held on, and the ruffian could do nothing.

The mate shoved the lantern in his face.

"What are you doing in the hold at this hour?" asked Mr. Flint. "Drop that knife, you rascal."

Blaine dropped it, for he couldn't help himself.

He made no answer, however, to the officer's question.

"Here, pull that chap back through the bulkhead," said Mr. Flint to the men.

Two of them reached for the rascal, and then Hal let go and got out of the way.

Blaine was not handled very gently, and the sailors soon landed him in the forward part of the hold, which was a sort of dunnage room, filled with rope, sails, and a hundred nautical articles.

The mate saw that the two missing boards, which lay close by, had been ripped out of position.

Of course, Blaine must have done it in order to make a passageway for himself.

"What was your object in trying to get into the main hold?" he asked the man, but Blaine maintained a dogged silence.

He had no excuse to offer, and so he said nothing.

"Take him out of this," ordered Mr. Flint.

Blaine was ordered up the ladder, and he went.

He was marched aft and the mate locked him up temporarily in a spare room adjoining the carpenter's quarters off the passage, until the captain passed upon his case.

Hal and Joe turned in again and slept until they were aroused at midnight by eight bells.

In the morning the captain was informed of Blaine's nocturnal wanderings.

He went forward, stepped down into the dunnage room and looked at the damage done by the rascal.

Hal stated the facts of the case to him, and on top of that spoke about the attempt Blaine made on Ryan's life at noon the day before.

"That matter should have been reported to me at once," said Captain Waldron.

"I thought he got enough from the crew," replied Hal. "They half killed him."

"He isn't a man to take chances with," replied the skipper.

He returned aft and ordered the ruffian brought before him.

Blaine had no excuse or defence to offer, so Captain Waldron had him put in irons and confined in the dunnage room.

Two days passed and then Misque pointed to a distant mountain with a round top which he said was where the village of Tamask was situated near its base.

"How far from that is the creek where the bark is held in the ice?" asked Captain Waldron.

"About eighty mile up the coast."

Hal was deeply interested in that mountain, for he knew it was the crater where the chest of gold was hidden.

He had found out that the other Esquimaux was the chap

who had seen the treasure and reported it, and then failed to find it again.

He was unable to talk with Guilik, because the man had a very limited knowledge of English, so he got Misque to act as interpreter.

In that way he got the whole of Guilik's story, and a general idea of where the Esquimau had seen the sea chest.

Guilik declared his readiness to make another attempt to locate the place if he was paid something for doing it.

Hal would gladly have made it worth his while, if the chance presented itself for himself and his friends to make the trip, but there was very little likelihood of it.

That afternoon he got permission to call on Jessie Waldron for a little while in the cabin.

This was a privilege often accorded him, chiefly to amuse the girl's idle moments, for she liked Hal's company very much indeed, and would have spent more time in his society if the brig's discipline had permitted it.

"You remember I told you about the treasure of the crater, don't you?" Hal said to her on this occasion.

"Yes," she answered.

"Well, the brig is in sight of the crater now. It's about twenty miles away to the nor'east."

"Is it?" she exclaimed with interest. "Let's go on the poop and look at it."

Accordingly, they made their way up the companion ladder, and standing on the roof of the cabin, near the skylight, Hal pointed out the distant mountain to her.

"Do you really believe there is a chest of gold in that crater?" she asked, almost eagerly.

"Well, I have only the word of the Esquimau for it, but I believe he told the truth. I have been talking to him about it, with the aid of Misque as interpreter, and he adheres to his story."

"Why, is the man on board the brig?"

"Sure he is. You know your father hired two Esquimaux—Misque and another. He's the other."

"How singular that he should be the one to come along with us!"

"Perhaps so; but that fact doesn't count for much. He's not carried along to guide us to the crater, but to drive one of the sleds on the expedition your father intends to send out after the survivors of the John Brown."

"Don't you think it would be worth the trouble to visit the crater on the chance of finding that chest of gold?"

"I do; but I have no say in the matter."

"Have you spoken to my father about the treasure?"

"I have, but he doesn't take any stock in it. He told me it was rather absurd that a sea chest full of gold coin should be hidden in such a place."

"But the people who owned it might have had reason for taking it there."

"Yes; but it's a wonder they didn't go back and get it."

"Probably they were never able to do so."

"That stands to reason if the treasure chest is actually there."

"I think father ought to make an attempt to find it. A chest full of gold must amount to a great deal of money."

"I'd be willing to spend a month looking for such a thing," said Hal.

"I mean to talk to father about it. Maybe I can interest him."

"I think it is doubtful. He doesn't want to hang around this neighborhood any longer than he can help. The men are liable to break out again on the least excuse. They are all afraid of getting caught in the gathering ice and being compelled to winter in this region. We can't count on free water for more than a month, and it is quite possible that navigation may begin to close up in less time than that. As there is no telling how long the land expedition may take, you see we have no time to fool away."

They returned to the shelter of the cabin, and shortly afterward Hal returned to duty on deck.

They passed Crater Mountain, as Hal called it, during the evening, the big landmark standing about twelve miles away.

It was impossible to make out the village at that distance, and the coast looked bleak and barren of all life.

Next morning the brig encountered a big field of ice, and they were obliged to run some miles out of their course in order to skirt it.

This looked like a harbinger of coming winter, though it wasn't really, for it had been there all through summer.

The sight of it offered the crew another excuse to raise a howl.

Another deputation waited on Captain Waldron and expressed to him the views of the crew to the effect that they didn't believe it was of any use to go on with the plan of trying to find either the John Brown or her officers and crew.

Even if they reached the bark the men felt satisfied that she could not be brought out of the creek, and the chances then were likely that the brig would be caught and held in the same fix during the long winter months.

As for the officers and crew, if they had deserted the bark, as the Esquimau said they had, they were either dead by that time or had reached a port and were on their way home.

They believed their contention was a good one, and they wanted the captain to turn around and sail the brig back.

In reply, Captain Waldron said that they were now within sixty or seventy miles of their destination, that they still might expect three or four weeks of good weather, and that he couldn't think of going back on his orders.

He was going to keep straight on for the creek, or for a point as close as he could get to it, and that's all there was to it.

Again the men felt helpless to carry their point without resorting to downright mutiny, and though they felt sulky enough to do most anything, the lack of a resolute leader prevented them from making any hostile demonstration.

The captain found to his satisfaction that the water to the north of the ice field was quite open and free from floating obstructions, and the brig made good headway during the next two days.

The skipper figured that they were now in the vicinity of the creek, and the watcher in the crow's nest had orders to keep a sharp lookout along shore for the masts of a vessel.

Hal, having excellent eyesight, alternated with Butler in the lookout barrel.

Captain Waldron promised a \$10 gold-piece to the watcher who first caught sight of the John Brown.

Both Hal and Butler were eager to win the prize, though the boy did not care so much for the money as for the honor of winning it, and making the captain's heart glad.

The brig sailed steadily on, as close in shore as it was deemed prudent to take her.

It was during the middle watch, from midnight till four in the morning, when Hal was on duty in the crow's nest, that he discovered the spars and masts of a vessel in the near distance.

Instead of singing out word he waited to make sure, and then made his way to the deck, which was against regulations, and rushed into the cabin to arouse the captain and tell him the news personally.

The door of the captain's room was slightly ajar, and he saw a dim light burning inside.

He supposed that the skipper had got up for some reason, and, dispensing with the formality of knocking, he pushed open the door and hurried in.

The sight that met his eyes caused him to stop and utter a gasp.

The captain lay asleep in his berth, and, bending over him, with knife upraised in the act of striking a murderous blow, stood Bill Blaine, who was supposed to be confined in the dunnage hold under the forecastle.

CHAPTER XII.

TAKING POSSESSION OF THE ABANDONED BARK

With a cry of alarm, which awoke Captain Waldron, Hal sprang on Blaine and seized the arm that held the knife.

With a terrible imprecation Blaine turned on the boy.

The weapon fell from his fingers and then he and Hal engaged in a desperate struggle for the mastery.

The captain looked at the swaying figures for a moment in astonishment, and then jumped out of his berth.

Blaine's strength was fast overcoming the boy when the captain, recognizing both of them, and knowing something was wrong, gripped hold of the rascal, and that turned the tide in Hal's favor.

"What's the meaning of this?" asked Captain Waldron. "Who let that fellow out of the hold where he was confined?"

"I couldn't tell you, sir; but you've had a mighty narrow shave for your life. I caught him bending over you, in the act of stabbing you with that knife lying on the floor."

"The infernal scoundrel!" exclaimed the skipper, aghast at the boy's words. "Run on deck and send the mate and a couple of the watch down here. I'll hold him until the men come."

Hal rushed up the companion ladder to the poop and told Noakes to get down into the captain's state-room as soon as he could.

He then shouted to two of the watch to come into the cabin.

He was there to meet them when they appeared, and he

led them to the captain's room, where the mate had already gone, and was helping the skipper hold on to the scoundrelly Blaine.

The fellow was soon rendered helpless, when he subsided into dogged silence.

"I must find out how that rascal got out of the hold," said Captain Waldron. "I don't see how he could have done so without help. Take him outside and tie him to the mainmast till I've made the investigation."

When the watch heard of Blaine's attempt on the captain's life they were so hot against the fellow that they wanted to hang him then and there without the trouble of a trial.

Captain Waldron thanked Hal in a grateful way for saving his life, and asked him by what fortunate circumstance he happened to come on the scene at such a critical moment.

"I came to tell you that I've sighted a vessel in shore which I guess is the John Brown, for she's clearly a bark," replied Hal.

"Good!" cried the skipper, in a tone of satisfaction. "I will dress and go on deck at once. Return to the crow's nest and keep your eyes on the vessel."

Hal obeyed.

When Captain Waldron came on the poop he sang out to the boy.

"Where away is the bark?"

"Two points off the starboard bow, sir."

The skipper gave the man at the wheel directions, and then calling the second mate, and two hands, they went forward and entered the forecastle with a lantern.

Going down into the hold, an examination showed that the irons which had secured Blaine must have been defective, for they were broken in such a manner as to release the prisoner.

It showed that the fellow possessed great strength and perseverance.

A fresh set of irons were got out and Blaine was returned to his prison and secured once more.

The captain then joined Hal in the crow's nest to get a look at the distant vessel, now not more than a mile away.

He was satisfied himself that it was the John Brown, and he was mighty well pleased that the northern limit of their trip was probably reached.

The water was fairly close in, and the trend of the creek was soon made out, which fact further satisfied Captain Waldron that the vessel was the bark he was in search of.

As the sun now hung very low on the horizon, for the summer season was drawing to a close, it was not so light in the early morning hours as formerly.

The brig was hove to and the captain ordered a boat lowered.

With only Hal and Joe for the boat's crew, the skipper made for the shore.

They found the ice thin and much broken up, and were able to get under the stern of the bark, where they easily made out her name, the John Brown.

Hal sprang on board first and made the boat fast, and then Joe and the captain followed.

The vessel was clearly deserted, and they soon saw she had been visited by Esquimaux, probably from the village

of Tamask, where Misque had spread the news of her presence and condition, and she had been cleaned out of everything worth carrying off that could easily have been handled by the natives.

She was secured by a cable and heavy anchor, and the captain saw that it would not be a difficult matter to get her out with the force he had at his command.

After getting the bark off into clear water he intended to organize two expeditions, one under command of the chief mate, with Misque for guide, and the other under the second mate, with Guilik for guide, and send them by different routes down the coast looking for traces of the second mate of the bark and the three men and the apprentice who were with him.

The Esquimaux were to be instructed to work their way to Tamasak, where, in the meantime, the captain intended to take the John Brown and anchor to await their coming with, or without, news of the survivors of the bark.

After looking the John Brown over as well as circumstances permitted, the captain and the boys returned to the brig, just as the bell announced the change of the watch at four o'clock.

Although the captain gave out no information then, the sailors surmised that the brig had reached the point the captain had been aiming for, and as there seemed to be no immediate danger of the ice closing in around them, they recovered their customary spirits, and looked for a speedy return south.

With the coming of morning the air grew lighter and the first mate's watch made out the spars of the John Brown from the deck.

The sight confirmed their expectations, and when all hands came together for breakfast the men were in a jolly mood, and their exuberant feelings expressed themselves in divers bits of horse play and a flow of witticism.

Captain Waldron lost no time in setting about the work of getting the abandoned bark out of the creek.

The wind was strong enough for the vessel to come around and sail out under her own canvas, in spite of the broken ice which hemmed her in at her anchorage.

Part of the brig's crew, including the three boys, were sent aboard of her under command of the chief mate.

In half an hour they got the anchor aboard and catted, and then all sail was made in order to get the full benefit of the breeze.

The chief trouble was getting her under headway.

This was finally accomplished, after the rest of the brig's crew had broken up the ice, which had become packed around her bows, and for some yards about her.

As soon as she got momentum on her the rest of the ice crumbled when her forefoot ploughed into it, and in the course of another hour she was sailing through comparatively free water.

By noon she was hove to close to the Dan Tucker.

The rest of the day was occupied in putting her in shape, and arranging the final details of the two land expeditions, which were to start first thing in the morning.

Only two members of the crew were to accompany each officer and the guide, as more were considered unnecessary.

Volunteers were called for, and half of the crew, including the boys, wanted to take part in the expeditions, for

the fact that each sled was to be accompanied by a first-class guide, and the distance to be traveled being not much over 100 miles, the trips were looked upon as a kind of picnic, and all the hands were eager for a spell on shore.

Each mate made his own selections, and they picked out the strongest men aboard.

That left the boys out of it, and they were rather disappointed.

Provisions were prepared for the trip, and done up in portable packages in the customary Arctic manner.

Breakfast was served out an hour earlier than usual on the following morning.

Then the sleds and dogs were taken ashore.

In an hour everything was ready for the departure over the snow-clad plain, and orders were given to proceed.

The captain then divided his crew in equal portions, and sent one part aboard of the John Brown, under command of the brig's carpenter, with Hal as his assistant in authority.

At Hal's request Nat and Joe were allowed to change to the bark, and the boys were happy to be together.

Both vessels then made sail and turned their bows toward the south.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAST AWAY IN ICELAND.

Everything went well during the first twenty-four hours, then the weather changed with a suddenness entirely unexpected.

First a dense fog came over the surface of the Strait, and shut the two vessels out from the sight of each other.

This lasted partly through the night and then the wind came on from the northeast and blew the fog away.

Hal, who was standing on the poop, in charge of the watch, looked around for the brig and found she was more than two miles ahead.

From then on the wind increased until an icy gale was shrieking through the cordage of the bark.

The water froze almost as fast as it struck the sails and cordage, making the sheets difficult to handle, and the deck a regular skating pond, on which the small crew were continually slipping when they moved about.

The carpenter came on deck to take charge, and all hands were called on duty.

The John Brown flew through the water like a greyhound, following the course of the Dan Tucker, which craft, being better handled, outstripped them in the mad race, and soon gained a lead of four miles, which increased as time went by.

To make matters worse, a heavy and blinding snowstorm came on, which proved as bad as the late fog.

However, the carpenter made the best of his trying job, and he hoped to pull through all right.

Unfortunately a large chunk of floating ice was driven with great force against the rudder, putting it out of commission to a considerable extent.

Thereafter it was all blind sailing, and things went from bad to worse.

Along toward morning the lookout heard a dull roar above the howl of the gale.

His experienced ear recognized it as the sound of breakers, and he shouted down "Breakers ahead!"

The vessel was driven on at such a speed that almost before the words were out of his mouth she struck on the shore, and by a singular accident was driven straight up between two towering rocks that supported her in an upright position.

The waves broke in notes of thunder against her stern, but that was the only part of her exposed to the sea.

With the coming of morning the storm blew out, and the snow vanished like magic, leaving the air clear.

The breaking up of the clouds let the sun shine at intervals, and then the people aboard saw that they had been cast away on the coast of Iceland, right under the shadow of Crater Mountain, with the village of Tamasak in sight a mile away.

A crowd of Icelanders and Esquimaux came down to view the stranded vessel, but they were not permitted to come on board.

The carpenter examined the bark as well as circumstances permitted, and he said he believed she was still perfectly seaworthy, or would be after her rudder had been repaired.

The day passed and still the brig did not show up.

"Say, Hal," said Nat, toward evening. "Here's a chance for us to make a trip up the mountain and see if we can discover that chest of treasure. What do you say to my proposition?"

"I have been figuring on it myself, and was going to propose it to you chaps."

"We're on," said Joe. "Let's start in the morning."

"All right. After supper we'll go to the village and try to find a guide who is acquainted with the crater."

The others agreed to that, and in due time they repaired to the village and found an Esquimau who was willing to guide them for a small consideration.

The lads made their preparations for the adventure that night, and after breakfast next morning they stepped on shore fully equipped for the trip.

Each carried a bag full of eatables, a hatchet to chop away any ice obstacles they might meet with, and a long, thin line wound around their waists.

They found the guide awaiting them with four short poles, provided with iron points, three of which he distributed among them.

He, too, had a strong, thin line wound around his middle.

No time was wasted in making a start, and the guide led the way by a route so easy that the boys looked on the climb as a cinch.

So they continued on behind the guide, who scarcely said a word to them, which was just as well, for his English was so bad they could hardly make out what he was driving at.

Noon found them nearly at the top, but here their real difficulties began, for the crater itself expanded in a broken and precipitous wall encircling the entire summit.

But for the guide they would have been at a loss how to proceed with safety.

The Esquimau, however, knew his way, and he naturally selected the best that could be picked out.

Before attempting the final stage, Hal called a halt for refreshments, and as the native had brought his own provender, all were provided for, and sat down on the hard snow to fill up and rest, though none of them felt particularly tired so far.

In half an hour they resumed their way, and it was now real climbing.

After much labor they reached the edge of the crater, and they found it an awesome-looking place.

Strung together with the ropes they proceeded to circle the top of the crater, the guide leading and cautioning them by motions where to step.

In this way they went half around the edge of the pit till they came to a point where the descent on the outside appeared comparatively easy.

In fifteen minutes Hal gave the signal to start down.

He said they were right above the place where Guilik had struck the cave.

They had proceeded about a third way down the mountain, by a new route from the one they had taken up, and the boys had seen nothing that even remotely looked like the mouth of a cave, when a peculiar rumbling sounded behind them.

The Esquimau turned with a startled look and glanced upward.

"Something is wrong," cried Hal. "By George, the top of the crater seems to be moving—moving down. It must be a snow slide that is coming. If it catches us here our names will be mud. Chase yourselves, fellows—follow the guide."

"Gee!" exclaimed Joe, making a spring.

He stepped on a piece of ice and lost his balance.

Nat reached forward to save him.

He caught Joe by the arm, but the effort took him off his balance, too, and both he and Joe left the path and started down a smooth incline.

At that moment the startled Hal was struck in the back of the feet by a big rolling chunk of ice, and he was sent sliding after his friends.

Joe suddenly disappeared over the edge of a break.

He lighted on a bank of hard snow which broke his fall, and he scrambled under the ledge and into an opening close by just as Nat shot down on the snow bank.

Nat crept under the protecting shelter of the overhanging rock as Hal came flying down the slippery surface above, followed by a rattling shower of snow and ice, the advance guard of the huge avalanche which was thundering down behind.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

Hal hit the snow bank with a thud, and added the impression of his body to those of the others.

Nat reached out his hand to him and yanked him in under cover.

Finally the huge bank of snow shot over and dropped like a cataract before their eyes.

The snow was over in a few minutes, but it was one the boys never forgot.

Then the boys looked around them.

"Why, this is a kind of cave," said Hal. "Maybe it's the one we're looking for. It would be great if it was. I'm going to crawl in and look around."

After going a few yards he came to a break and could go no further.

Looking down he found himself gazing into a small cave lighted by a jagged opening above.

In the center of it was a sea chest, the cover thrown back, and the interior apparently filled with gold coins, while much of the money was scattered outside.

"Eureka!" shouted Hal, and his friends, looking down, joined in the shout.

"We have ropes," said Nat. "We'll lower you down there."

In a few minutes Hal was in the cave dipping up the coins with his hands.

The rope was secured to a projecting rock and Nat and Joe joined Hal.

After looking at the treasure for awhile they started to explore the next cave, and that led them to a third, and thence to a fourth and fifth, all formed out of a peculiar kind of brittle rock.

At last they came to an opening like a window, beyond which all was pitch dark.

Hal clambered up and peered through, but could see nothing.

Suddenly he heard the sound of voices talking in the English tongue below him.

"Now that our provisions are all gone we won't last much longer, Mr. Hoyt," said a voice.

"Hoyt!" thought Hal, as the name sounded familiar. "Why that was the name signed to the letter detailing the tragedy of the John Brown. Maybe the survivors the captain is looking for are cooped up here. Hello, below!" he shouted.

"Who's there?"

"Is Howard Hoyt, second mate of the John Brown, down there?" asked Hal.

"Yes, yes; you are friends. In Heaven's name, save us!"

"We are three boys belonging to the whaler, Dan Tucker. We found your bark and are looking for you. We'll save you, bet your life. How came you in that spot?"

"We took shelter from a snowstorm four months ago, and were shut in by an avalanche of ice which we couldn't break through. We didn't know there was a hole up where you are, or we might have escaped through it. We found a cache of food here, or we would have starved long ago. The provisions are now exhausted and we expected nothing but death in a day or two."

"I'll send you down a line, and you can crawl up one by one," said Hal.

In a short time the five survivors of the John Brown stood in the cave where the boys were, and sorry looking men they were, but very thankful to feel that they had been rescued at last.

Hal told the mate how they came to be there, and about

the chest of money in the outer cave, after which he led the way there and showed them the great sight.

He climbed up the rope into the horizontal hole and crawled out into the open air.

He found that a narrow path led down to a shelf below, from which it was easy to go on farther.

It was quicker and easier to reach the shelf by stringing a rope down.

After his friends and the survivors clambered out of the money cave, Hal tied the three ropes together and found they made a line long enough to answer.

"We'll look for the rope when we come back," he said, "and that will guide us to the cave where the chest is."

Each of the lads brought away a handful or two of the gold as evidence that they had found the treasure.

The brig had arrived while they were in the crater, and great was Captain Waldron's astonishment when Hal brought on board the survivors of the John Brown.

The captain was hardly less surprised when Hal showed him the gold he had brought from the cave, and told him they had discovered the treasure.

Several of the crew with bags accompanied the boys next day, and the money was conveyed aboard the brig, where it was counted and footed up nearly \$300,000.

The boys presented each of the hands \$1,000, including the survivors.

They divided \$10,000 more among the captain and mates, and presented Jessie with \$5,000 for herself.

Hal gave Guilik \$1,000, and then each of the boys had \$80,000 for themselves.

The second mate of the bark was told about Bill Blaine, and the ruffian was brought before him.

The mate identified him as Steve Williams, the murderer, and after that he was closely watched on the trip home.

Both vessels duly arrived at New Bedford, and Williams, alias Blaine, was sent to jail, charged with murder.

At his trial Captain Matthews' note, written by his dying hand, was produced as evidence against him.

He was convicted, and subsequently paid the extreme penalty of the law.

Hal, Nat and Joe quit seafaring, for they did not need to earn their living by the sweat of their brows any longer.

They went into the ship chandlery business together under the firm name of Holland, Vickers & Marsh, and did well.

Some years afterward Hal led Jessie Waldron to the altar, and their children are never weary of hearing how their father and his partners were cast away in Iceland, and discovered the treasure of the crater.

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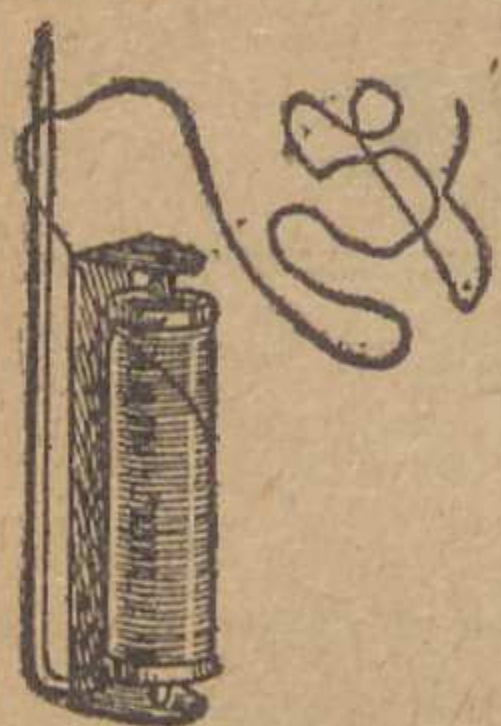
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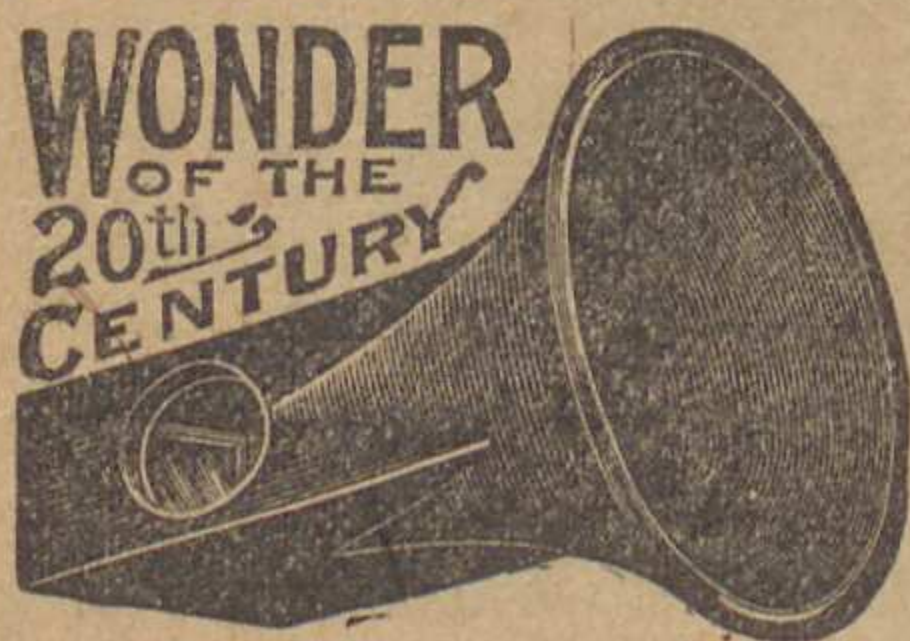
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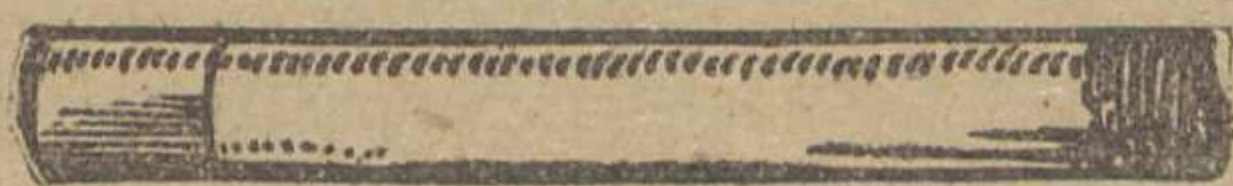


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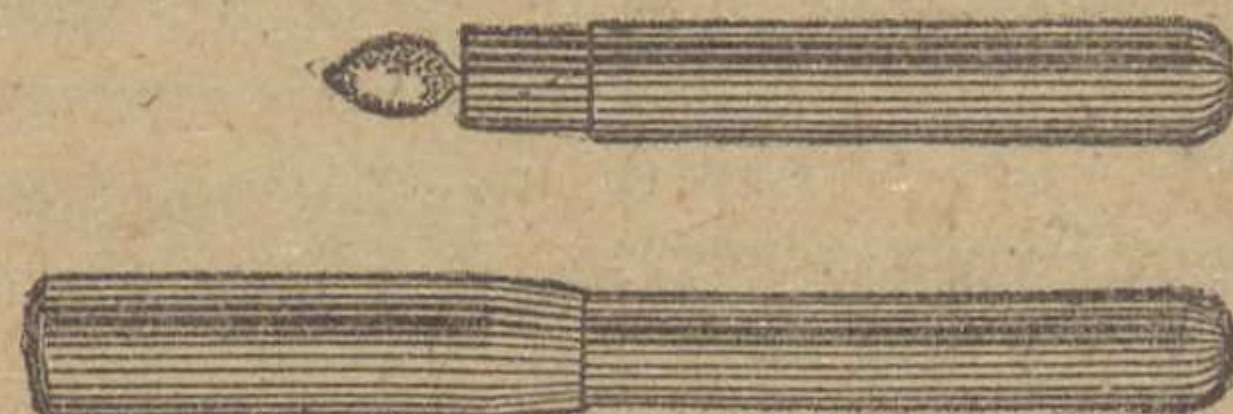
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GOOD STORIES.

"That new steamer they're building is a whopper," says the man with the shoe-button nose. "Yes," agrees the man with the recalcitrant hair, "but my uncle is going to build one so long that when a passenger gets seasick in one end of it he can go to the other end and be clear away from the storm."

Mrs. Mishaw—You praise yourself too much, my dear. People would appreciate you more, and would tell you so, if you were to cultivate a little modest reticence. Mr. Mishaw—There's where you are out. I did that for years, and nobody took any notice of me but you.

William Dean Howells told a good story about a critic. "To this critic," he said, "a popular novelist brought his first novel in manuscript—a manuscript of about 140,000 words. The critic duly read it, then he gave the actor this advice: 'Cut out half.' The young man accepted the advice. He cut out all the weak and dull portions, and it seemed to him that the story was improved wonderfully thereby. He sent it in its new form to the critic, who then gave him his second piece of advice: 'Cut out the other half.'"

The doorbell of the Vanity house rang at about 8 o'clock one night, and Mrs. Vanity said excitedly to her husband: "There, Charles, I know that's the furniture van coming with the new bedroom suite we bought to-day, and if it is I just won't receive it, that's all." "Why not?" asked Mr. Vanity. "Why not?" repeated Mrs. Vanity. "Do you think I'm going to pay \$100 for a suite and then have it sent out here after dark, so that none of the neighbors can see it when it's brought in? Not if I know it."

Eight thousand five hundred pounds of Arkansas black walnuts and 8,124 pounds of red oak acorns have been shipped by the Federal Government from Harrisburg, Ark., to District Forester Chapman of Portland, Oregon, to be distributed through the burnt districts of the Pacific Northwest. The black walnuts of Arkansas are among the most valued trees of that region and furnish lumber of the highest value in the market. Their introduction into the forests of the Pacific Northwest will be of great value to the generations to come if they succeed. While it is regarded as an experiment the district forester believes that they will succeed, and that in twenty-five years the walnut will be regarded as one of the important products of Oregon's lumber mills and furniture factories. Oregon will receive a good share of the seed, and the distribution will take place within the next few months.

The seeds will be sent to the forest rangers, who will take charge of planting them in the burned over areas.

The Rev. George Brown, D. D., an English divine who has spent many years of his life in the South Sea Islands endeavoring to stamp out polygamy and cannibalism among the natives, has returned to civilization to supervise the publication of his book. It is evident from what he says, the civilization has a long and tedious task ahead of it endeavoring to reform some of the wild tribes inhabiting that portion of the globe. In some parts of New Britain, for instance, the natives have very queer ideas of matrimony. Among other practices is one of placing young women in strict seclusion before marriage by imprisoning them in cages for several years until they reach a marriageable age. Mr. Brown describes how on one occasion he inspected a number of these human cages. The atmosphere inside them was hot and stifling. He says: "The cage was quite clean and contained nothing but a few short lengths of bamboo for holding water. There was only room for a girl to sit or lie down in a crouched position on the bamboo platform, and when the doors are shut it must be nearly or quite dark inside. They are never allowed to come out except once a day to bathe in a dish or wooden bowl placed close to each cage. They are placed in these stifling cages when quite young and must remain there until they are young women, when they are taken out and have each a great marriage feast provided for them."

JOKES AND JESTS.

"Cholly fought a duel lately with wax bullets." "Oh, dear me! I hope none of them struck him in the head."

"My rich uncle is dead." "He left you something, did he not?" "Yes." "Good! What did he leave you?" "Penniless."

"Well, what do you think of my son-in-law's new portrait?" "It's a speaking likeness. He looks exactly as if he was going to borrow ten dollars of you."

An Improvement—By the latest device you can drop a coin in the slot and start a fire in the house. The machine will not be perfect until you can drop in a nickel and fire the cook.

"It would please me mightily, Miss Stout," said Mr. Mugley, "to have you go to the theatre with me this evening." "Have you secured the seats?" asked Miss Vera Stout. "Oh, come, now," he protested, "you're not so heavy as all that."

A story by Lord Decies: "I said to a cabby the other day: 'How much to take me to the Hotel X?' 'Four dollars,' the man answered. 'Oh,' I said, 'I didn't ask the price of the rig. I don't want to buy it.' 'Well, I should think not,' said the cabby. 'The horse alone cost \$4.50.'"

There was a young school teacher who thought she knew how to rule boys by kindness, and not by fear. So on the first day she assumed a bright smile and told them that she wouldn't be angry at a little innocent fun. If they whispered she was willing to believe that it was necessary. She would treat them like gentlemen and ladies, not like babies. As long as they didn't throw spitballs they could go as far as they liked. That was the only thing she detested. It made a great hit with the school, that. For months they haven't done anything but throw spitballs.

THE FAIR CASTAWAY.

By Kit Clyde

The good ship Waverly, homeward bound from Japan, was becalmed in mid-ocean.

"What land did you say that was, Captain Lane?" asked young Percy, the second mate, pointing to a wild, picturesque-looking island lying less than a league and a half off the lee bow.

"One of the Society group. By my chart that should be Morley Island. Let's see, you said you touched there for water the year before last, when you were on the Atlas, did you not, Jack?"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the old tar, quickly; "and a lively time we had, too. We seed the prettiest girl there that ever lived. But Lord! she was as wild as a gull."

"A beautiful girl on that island?" cried Oscar Perley, incredulously.

"Ay, ay, Mister Perley. And I'll bet my sou'wester again' my head she was none of the black-and-tan natives, either. We wanted to go back and look for her again, but the old skipper wouldn't believe us, nor say but she was an Indian girl."

"Captain Lane, I am more determined to go ashore than ever," exclaimed the mate, in a fever of excitement. "What do you say, Clarence?" he asked, turning to the supercargo, a good-looking young man of two-and-twenty.

"I am with you. We can get back before the breeze comes up."

"Oh, yes; I'll warrant you are both dying to go!" muttered old Captain Lane. "Just say there is a pretty girl on that island, and all the sea-lions in seven seas couldn't keep you. Well, you had my consent before, and I shall not withdraw it. But look sharp for the savages there and return the minute I sound the trumpet, if you don't before."

In less than fifteen minutes the young officers, accompanied by four sailors, were fairly flying over the water towards the island.

Touching upon the sandy beach, they drew up their boat in a cove nearly hidden by overhanging trees and started inland.

"If we wish to see the girl we have got to be pretty sly, for she's a wild one," declared Jack. "Then we must be on our lookout for the natives, too, for they're as beastly set as you ever saw."

After an hour's weary tramp, however, they were beginning to think they should have to return to the ship in disappointment, when, as they paused for a moment to gaze out upon the sea, the tone of some one sweetly singing was wafted to their ears.

When they had listened until the song was finished enraptured with the melody, Clarence exclaimed, joyously:

"It must be she!"

"Yes; and she must be a fairy to sing like that. Come, boys, let's go down there. But, for your life, don't disturb her."

Advancing cautiously, until they gained the line of thick shrubbery that skirted the beach, they parted the foliage, to behold the loveliest vision their gaze had ever met.

Standing in the shallow water, that laughed and played at her delicately-formed feet and ankles in high glee, while she was engaged in fastening her waving mass of golden hair, which fell far down her waist, into pretty braids, was a beautiful maiden of scarcely sixteen summers.

Her form, habited in a well-fitting garb made of the inner bark of the sea island willow, was faultless, and her features were perfect in their outlines, while the purity of her com-

plexion seemed only enhanced by the slightly-bronzed hue that a life of exposure to a tropical sun had given it.

"Isn't she beautiful!" exclaimed Oscar, lost in admiration.

"Yes," whispered the supercargo, in reply, equally fascinated with her appearance. "But see, she is going to sing again."

Again the air was filled with the sweet notes of her song, and until the last sound had died away the entranced listeners did not dare to even breathe aloud for fear of breaking the magic spell.

"There is no Indian blood in her veins!" declared Oscar, slowly, as she ended her song, and they continued to gaze upon her in rapt wonder. "Her features and the tone of her speech are American."

"You are right, Oscar," whispered Clarence. "And, look! she wears a chain and locket which tells that she has not always been here."

His companions started with renewed surprise as they discovered a gold chain and locket suspended from her neck.

"I would give a year of my life to know the mystery of her existence here!" exclaimed the mate, impetuously. "I am going to speak to her."

Suiting the action to the words, he stepped lightly forward, and addressed her in a clear voice.

But, as the first sound fell from his lips, she turned in alarm, and catching sight of him fled like a frightened gazelle.

Seeing that it was vain to think of overtaking her, they could only watch her out of sight with looks of wonder.

"We must find her, boys," declared the excited mate, and his words were heartily seconded by the supercargo.

The others were nothing loath to join in the wild chase.

Away dashed the sailors on the course of the fugitive maid, but finally they were forced to abandon the search as a fruitless one.

Hark! at that moment, high and clear over the mile or more of intervening sea, came the clarion note of the captain's trumpet.

"We must return to the ship now, but I am determined the Waverley shall not leave these waters till we know more of that——"

"Hough-ough-on!" broke in a wild, discordant yell upon the mate's speech. Then half a hundred furious natives rushed towards them from every quarter.

Six against fifty in an open fight.

The sailors were brave men, but in less time than we could describe it, they were hurled to the earth and overpowered.

Instead of putting them to death then and there, however, the savages bore them away with exultant cries.

Finally a valley, teeming with tropical growth, was reached, and the prisoners saw the rude huts under the cocoanut trees that comprised the home of their captors.

Here they were met by a motley throng of old men, women and children, who crowded around with anxious gaze, and anon uttered startling yells.

But our friends looked in vain for the island nymph.

The triumphant savages bore them forward to the center of the glade, into the presence of an old, weazen-faced native, seated squat upon the ground in front of the largest wigwam.

At sight of the captives, he gave an exclamation of delight, and sluggishly gaining his feet, passed slowly around them, his snakish eyes gleaming maliciously.

After he had satisfied his curiosity, a long consultation was held between him and the leader of the captors, wholly unintelligible to our friends, though they knew from the violent gestures made no good was boded them.

Briefly told, at its conclusion three of the savages seized Oscar and led him to a huge cocoanut tree, where he was compelled to stand upright against its trunk.

(Continued on page 32)

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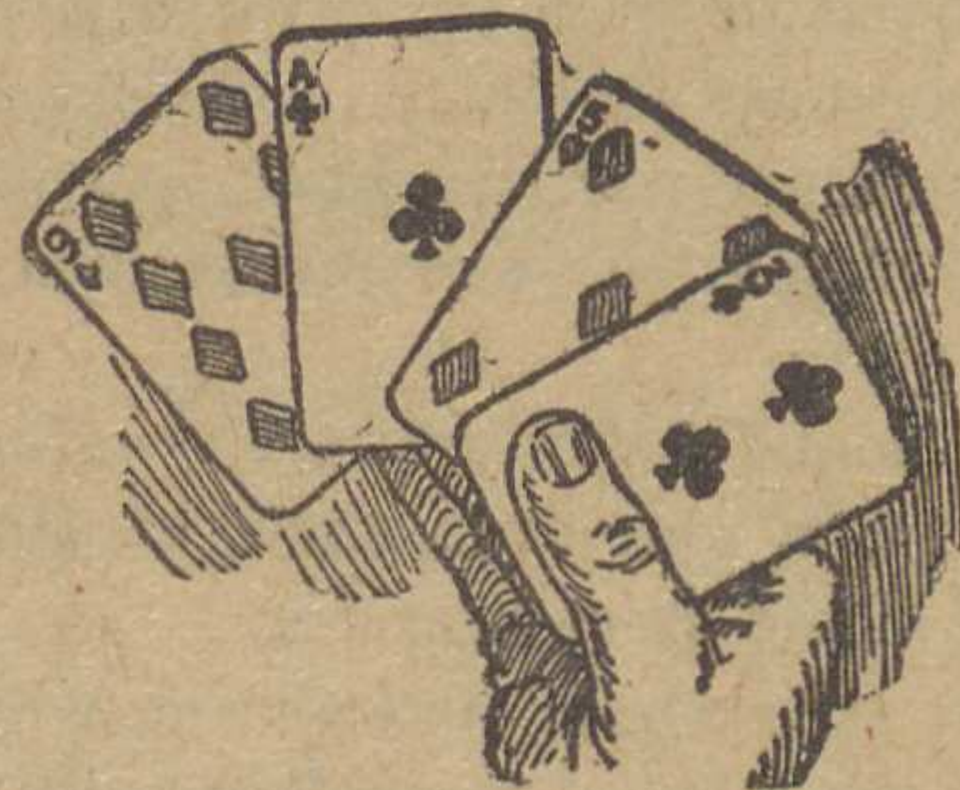
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(Continued from page 29)

Clarence and Jack were then placed one on each side of him, when three spearsmen with their rude weapons were stationed a short distance off, ready to send the instruments through their bodies.

A treble sacrifice was intended.

The doomed men looked in vain for mercy among the swarthy visages before them, and their lips moved in prayer.

Then they closed their eyes in horror as the savage executioners raised their weapons.

At this critical juncture a sharp cry was uttered, and looking up the whites saw the beautiful maiden rushing towards them.

She did not pause until she reached their side, when she placed herself in front of Oscar, and waved her hand frantically to the spearsmen.

The old chief came forward with an angry frown, and ordered her to stand aside, but, with flashing eyes, she met him unflinchingly.

"Warana no warrior to kill helpless white face!" she cried, in broken English. "See, they like Star Singer much. She no let Warana kill!"

Maddened by her defiance, the chief commanded his followers to take her away.

Her shapely foot stamped the ground impetuously, as she cried:

"Warana touch Star Singer and she kill quick. She no sing more for Warana."

Evidently the chief did not care to lose her, for he hesitated in his designs.

It is doubtful if the heroic girl could have rescued the captive sailors, but she had saved their lives by delaying the execution.

Wild shouts rung on the air, and a body of the Waverley's crew rushed into the valley.

Panic seized the frightened natives, and the whites won a bloodless victory.

"The captain thought you were in trouble and sent us to you."

"And with this brave girl you have saved our lives," said the young mate, warmly grasping his brother officer's hand.

The wonder of the seamen at beholding the fair timid maid can be well imagined.

"You must go with us," said Oscar, clasping her hand.

She trembled violently, and her gaze hardly left the sight of the terrified natives, huddled together in a group not far off, but without a word she yielded, seeming to feel that she was a captive.

It was many days before she mingled freely with her new-found friends and even then, at times, the old spirit of uneasiness would steal over her.

In that time Oscar and Clarence learned to love her dearly and the sometime friends gradually felt a gulf widening between them.

Finally the mate could bear the suspense no longer, and he resolved to know his fate.

As yet, she had allowed no one to touch the locket she wore.

As Oscar told the story of his love, however, he pleaded again that he might examine it, when at last she consented.

Pressing a spring it flew open, disclosing the portraits of a man and woman.

As the gaze met the pictures, the mate uttered a cry of surprise.

"My father and mother!" he exclaimed. "Can it be possible you are my sister, who was lost at sea twelve years ago in the ship Velveen, bound for the Sandwich Islands, in charge of Uncle Jabez Waring? She never was heard of after passing

the Horn and we never knew where she was lost, but here is a clew."

"Writing in there," said the girl, and taking the locket from his hand she pressed out one of the miniatures, and there lay a bit of paper yellowed with age, which she handed to Oscar. He read aloud:

"The wearer of this is Captain Osgood Perley's daughter. She and I have been castaways upon this island from the ship Velveen. The natives have doomed me to die. I pray whoever may find her will bear her to her parents, now in the Sandwich Islands, or there learn their whereabouts.

"Jabez Perley."

"It is true," cried the mate. "My sister, my long-lost sister." And he clasped the surprised maid in his arms.

Clarence appeared upon the scene with looks of amazement.

"Congratulate me, old boy," cried Oscar, excitedly. "I have found my sister—the lost May—that we have mourned so many years, who was left behind when father and mother went to the Sandwich Islands fourteen years ago, but when she was four years old Uncle Jared took her on his whaling-ship bound for Bebring's Straits, designing to leave her with our parents in the Sandwich Islands, where father then was consul. The ship never was heard from after she passed the Horn, but here is the sad proof that she was lost."

The Waverley reached port in safety, and soon after a father and mother who had mourned their daughter as dead for twelve years, were overjoyed to have her restored to them; while to her it all seemed like a strange, sweet dream.

Two years later Clarence and the fair May were married.

Oscar Perley is now a happy husband and father, as well as a thriving merchant.

A SNAKE FIGHT.

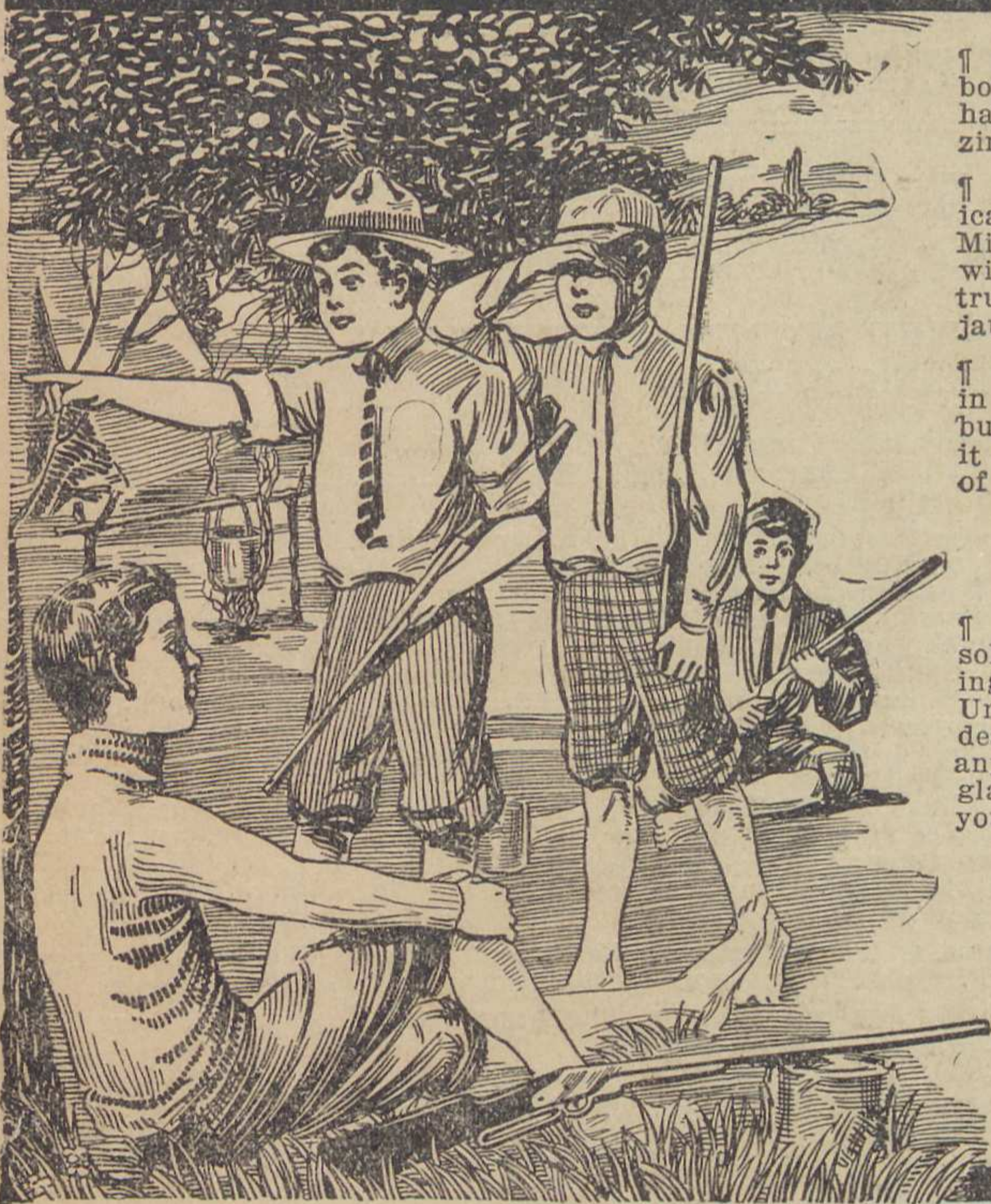
Near Tallahassee, on the Jackson estates, I witnessed a battle between the king snake and the black snake that was lively and entertaining. The moccasin is usually cock of the walk and naturally makes a meal off the rattlesnake, but the little yellow and black striped king snake whips both of these and all other species. My attention was attracted by the cries of the negroes, and hastening to the spot I found a king snake coiled around an enormous black reptile strangling his breath out. The negroes stated that both had been awakened from the same log, where they had hibernated during the winter, by the warm sun, and the king immediately drove out the black fellow and chased him about one hundred yards. I wanted to see a renewal of the combat and fair play, and had the combatants separated. The black started to run away, but the king seized him by the tail with his mouth and instantly coiled about the black and took him by the throat.

He tightened his cords and held on to the black's throat, occasionally smelling of the black's mouth to ascertain if it breathed.

Not less exciting was a combat I witnessed at Pensacola navy yard between a porpoise and a shark. The porpoise was not over six feet long and the shark was three times that length. The porpoise chased the shark for several miles in a circle not over four hundred yards in diameter.

Both animals made terrific leaps out of the water, and at every approach the shark struck desperately at the porpoise with his tail. At last the shark wearied a little and diminished his speed accordingly. With incredible speed the porpoise dashed ahead, dove under the big tyrant, and crushed in the shark's neck with its heavy jaw. The shark rolled over dead and floated away with the tide.

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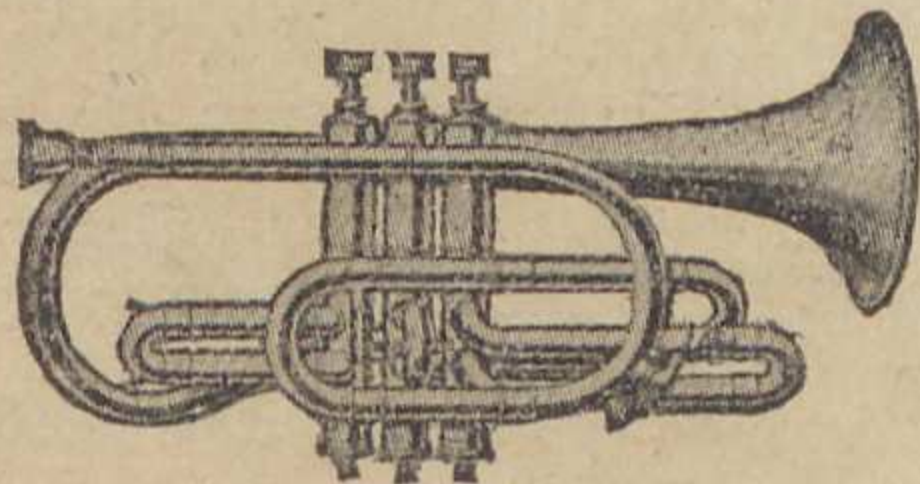
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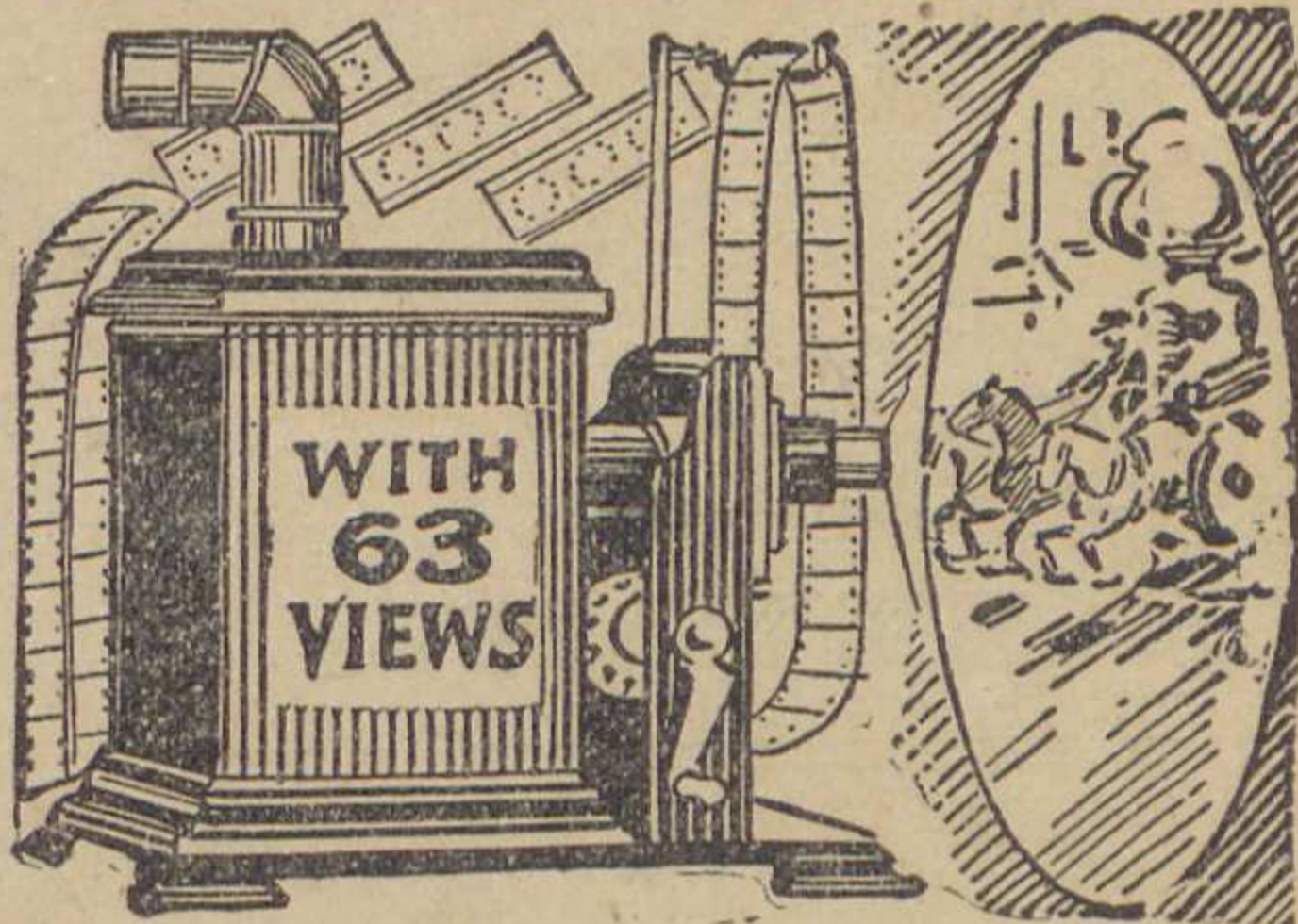
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